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The Cables and the Power, Mobilising Space, Mobilising for Space in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Beirut, Lebanon (2014-2017)

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DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES – KING’S COLLEGE
LONDON

The cables and the power

Mobilising space, mobilising for space in the
Palestinian refugee camps of Beirut, Lebanon
(2014 – 2017)

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Abstract: Politics in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon have been studied through a number of perspective, mostly focusing on the relation to national liberation and collective memory. The politics of materiality in the camps, and especially the urban issues, have also received some interest from research, especially after the Lebanese Civil War, but little has been said around the forms of mobilisations surrounding these issues. Relying on an interdisciplinary work situated between human geography and social movement theory, this thesis proposes to look at these questions to explore the ways in which the politics of the refugee camps have evolved in the post-Civil War period. The thesis explores the spatial structuration of the camps, defining the camps' space as a dimension of the social, with effects on it. Drawing on the pragmatic turn in sociology, the thesis proposes a pluralist model to interaction in the camps, describing several spatially-located grammars of interactions the camp-dweller the camp-dwellers can mobilise in public interactions. These grammars of interaction structure activities of framing social problems and situations in the camps, and explain disputes on a category of spatialised social problems, the "problems of the camps". For local activists, politicising around these problems is a way to approach politics in other ways than the "partisan" framework. With attention to their spatial anchoring, the thesis then described a number of organisations, paying attention to the resources, discourses, and modes of proof they rely on to make their actions in the camps acceptable and impose their social representations. The situations of conflict with the alleged authorities in the camps and the mundane work of these organisations are described. Finally, the effects of these phenomena on space are seen, showing how space is imbued with new meanings as these mobilisations unfold. Space is therefore seen as a factor as much as a result of social interaction.

هنا، عند مُنَحَدَرَات التلال، أمام الغروب وقُوَّة الوقت،
قُرْبَ بساتينَ مقطوعةِ الظلِّ،
نفعلُ ما يفعلُ السجناءُ،
وما يفعلُ العاطلون عن العمل :
نُرَبِّي الأملَ
محمود درويش - حالة حصار

*Here, on the hillsides, facing West,
and the chasm of time,
near orchards the shades of which have been cut,
we do what the prisoners do,
we do what the jobless do:
We sow hope*

Mahmoud Darwish – State of Siege

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I am infinitely indebted to the people I have met in Lebanon, who had the patience to tolerate yet another foreign student poking his nose in their business, whose presence was often awkward and sometimes (I hope, not too often) annoying. I know the situation of the camps in regard to research, and of the weight we often put on the refugee camps' dwellers by our mere presence. During this work I have attempted not to add too much to that weight, to pay attention, and as much as I could to provide a honest account of what I could witness. Some camp dwellers or refugees may in time find themselves reading these words. I hope they find what is written here not too dishonest to their experience. Moe Ali Nayel once wrote that Palestinian refugees were not at researchers' service, a sentence I have kept in mind during and after my work in Lebanon. I hope not to have conveyed the impression that they were.

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*And before all, this is dedicated to you, up there on your cloud,
whom I would still miss,
were a thousand years to pass.*

Note on translation, transliteration, and copyright

All translations, and especially all translations from French academic sources in this thesis were made by the author. The transliteration of Arabic follows the ISO 233-2:1993 norm. People's and places' names are transliterated without regard to this norm (Yasir Arafat, Ghassan Kanafi, Shatila, Mar Elias, Burj al-Barajneh, etc.). I have reduced the use of transliteration as much as possible, to ease the thesis' reading, and by wish of not reifying the actors' categories when unnecessary.

Unless otherwise specified, all images, graphs, and schemas presented in this dissertation are my own, under CC-BY-NC.

Acronyms

CfW	Cash for Work
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Fateh	Palestinian National Liberation Movement
Hamas	Islamic Resistance Movement
LPDC	Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PC	Popular Committee
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PYN	Palestinian Youth Network
SDC	Swiss Development Council
SMT	Social Movement Theory
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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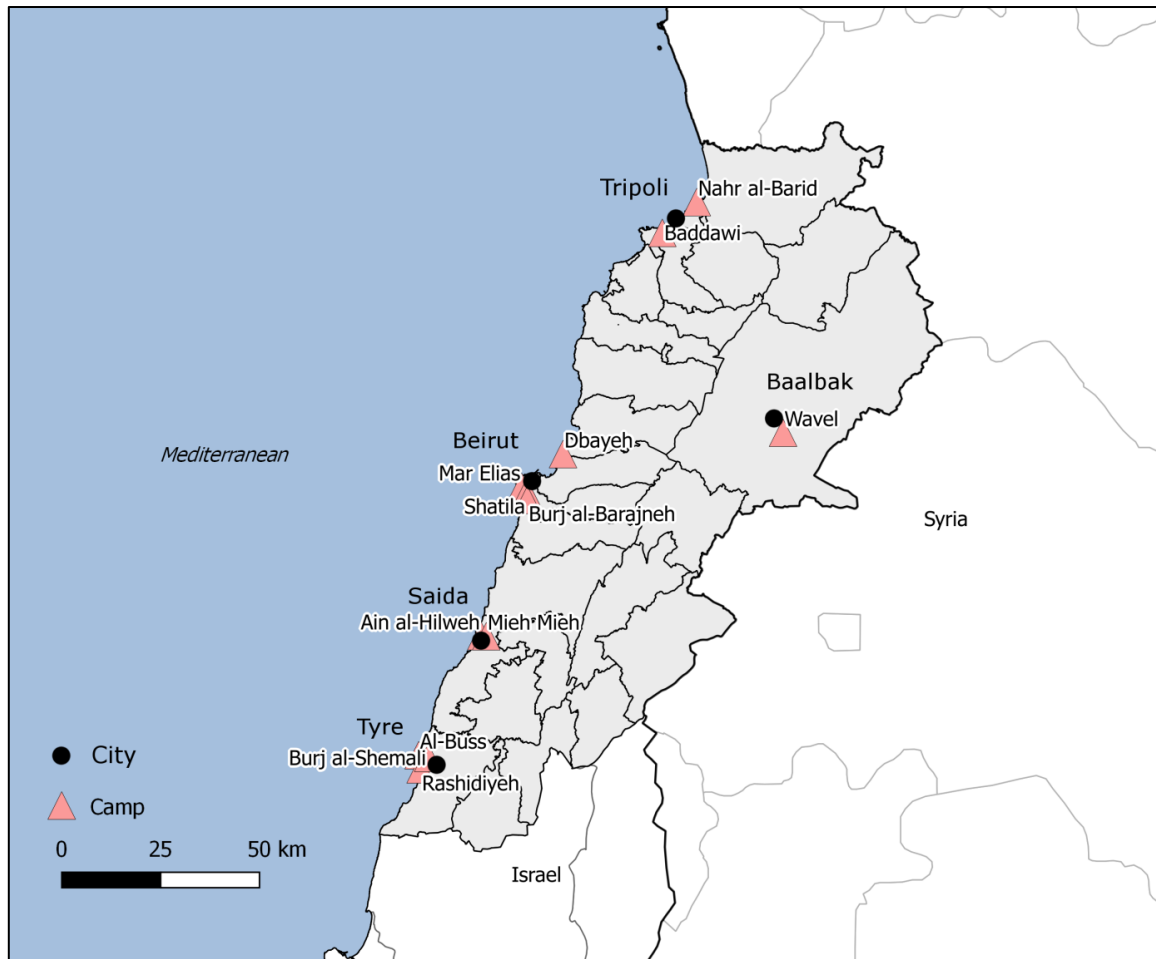
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Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the relation between space¹ and social movements in the Palestinian refugee camps of Beirut. The 1947-1948 conflicts marks the birth of the Palestinian refugee question in the Middle East (Morris 2009:410–11). After a period of exodus marked by instability (Sfeir 2008), the camps emerge in Lebanon at the borders of the coastal cities (Fig 1 and 2), because of social, political, economic, and institutional factors (Doraï 2006). In Lebanon, the exiled Palestinians and their descendants have been particularly discriminated from the rest of the population, the topic of the rejection of the refugees' permanent resettlement (*Tawṭīn*) in the country being central (Meier 2008; Sfeir 2008). The country is also specific because of the demographic place of the refugee population. Although hard to evaluate precisely (Jaber 2002), the Palestinian population in Lebanon approaches, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 463,664 registered refugees, of which 260,106 declared to live in the camps (UNRWA 2017b). These figures imply an approximate ratio of one Palestinian refugee for ten Lebanese nationals living in the country, more than half of whom are encamped.

¹ There are, as noted by Ilana Silber (1995), many spatial metaphors in the social sciences, some of which have



*Figure 1: The Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon in 2017 at the margins of coastal cities
(Neil Ketchley)*

The camps have little to do with the formulaic representation of rows of tents and dirt roads. This particular scenery of humanitarian suspension of time has long left the place for a more solid, although not necessarily less precarious, urban fabric. With time, the camps have become in strictly material terms an integrated and segregated part of the cities, as their solidification and integration into networks of urban services developed (Al-Qutub 1989). Beyond the idea of a “space of exception” proposed by Giorgio Agamben (Agamben 1998), the camps are increasingly comprehensible as precarious parts of urban systems: “Born as spaces that freeze their inhabitants’ status and condition, camps turn their temporariness into a ‘transient permanency’” (Martin 2015), revealing a situation far from abnormal, setting aside Agamben’s West-centric perspective, described by Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski (2006:8–9).

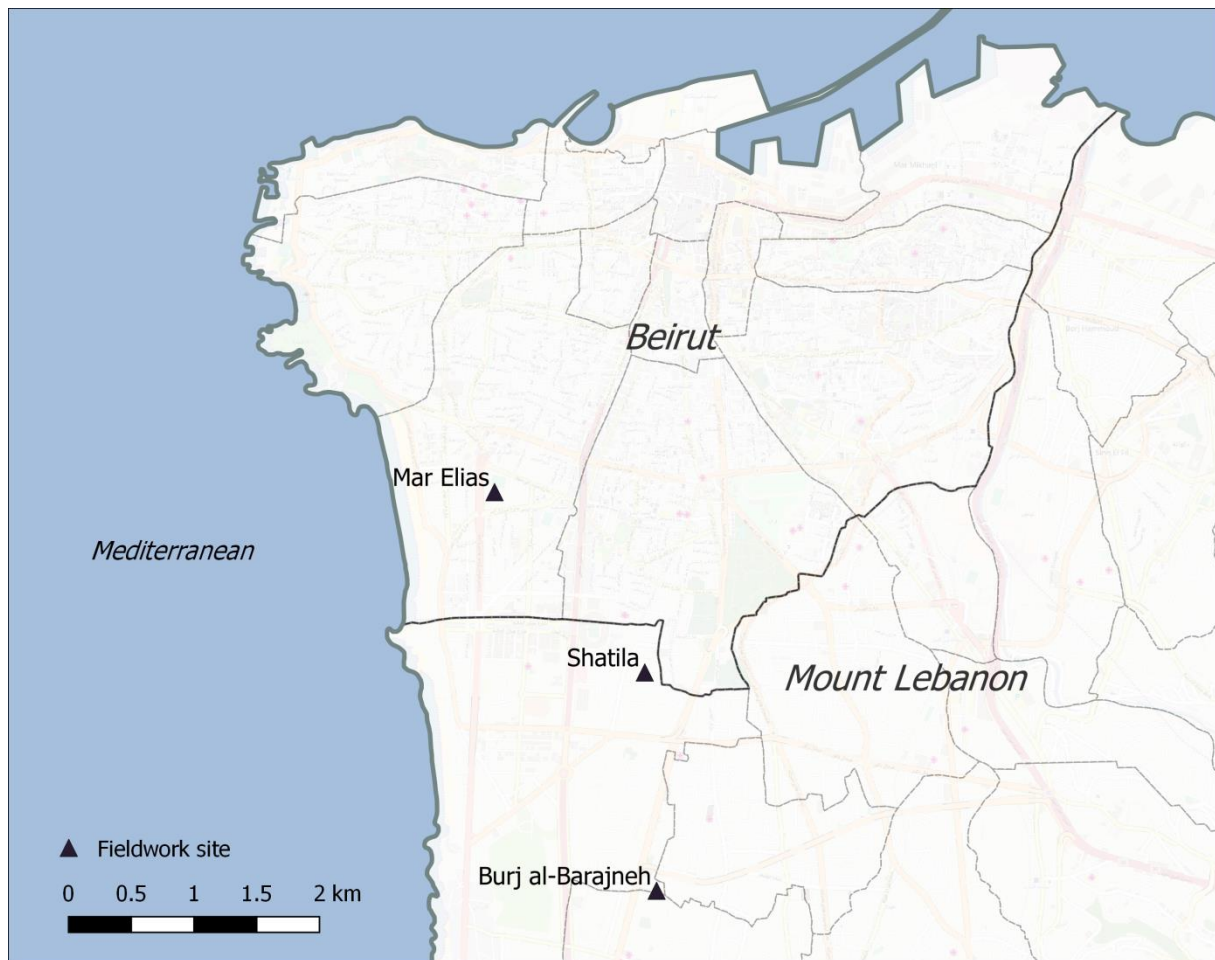


Figure 2: Locating the field: The Palestinian camps of Beirut (Neil Ketchley)

The urban dimension of the camps had been, in the academic discussion and beyond, an increasing topic of concern in the first two decades of the 21st century. After the period of reinforcement of the encampment which immediately followed the war (Peteet 2005), the camps' overall population increased from the installation within them of a number of non-Palestinians, as well as demographic growth. The strain caused by urban growth on the camps has led UNRWA to update its infrastructure renewal program in 2007 (Misselwitz 2011), following an incremental change from the 1970s onwards from a top-down, modernist approach, to a comprehensive one (Bocco 2009). The same year, the conflict between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the group Fatah al-Islam in Nahr el-Barid ended with the destruction of an important part of the camp, causing debates about the importance of urban destruction in the management of the camps (Knudsen 2011; Ramadan 2009b), and conflicts emerging around its reconstruction (Hassan and Hanafi 2010). Another case has been the

security crisis in Ain al-Hilweh camp in 2015, leading to the construction of a wall surrounding the camp (Zaatari 2016). These tendencies were only increased by the emergence of the Syrian civil conflict, leading to the arrival of more dwellers in the camps. For UNRWA, the urban management of the camps remains a sensitive point as residents “suffer conditions of often extreme deprivation in homes that do not conform to minimum protection and security standards. (...) Continued years of underfunding, coupled with the poor economic condition of refugees, have translated into rapid degradation of the overall environment where Palestine refugees live” (UNRWA 2017a). In post-Civil War Lebanon, the political situation of the refugees has impacted the urbanism of the camps, which has become a political matter.

From refugee studies to the Palestinian camps of Lebanon

Arising in the second half of the 20th century, the refugee question has developed in parallel to reflexion on the humanitarian world (Zetter 1988). Refugee camps, in particular, have been submitted to inquiry. Giorgio Agamben proposed that “The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule. In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on a basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order” (Agamben 1998:168–69). Michel Agier, investigating the differences and continuities between refugee and concentration camps, described the effects of *humanitarian government*: “The ends and means diverge considerably of course. Nonetheless, the difference is less absolute when it comes to shapes, and the parallel allows focusing on a continuity of what we can call ‘the camp solution’” (2006).

The refugee camps fit in the broader technique that is the *strangers’ camp*, described by Marc Bernardot as “An imposed and arbitrary gathering of civilians imprisoned without judgement outside of the penitentiary system, aiming to isolate, expulse, re-educate or make them work. Practised on ad hoc or existing sites, mostly outside of cities, it offers itself for a diversity of military, police, economic and social uses” (2008:11–12). In this perspective, refugee camps

are designated as a liminal² space, marked by both the alleged impossibility to reconstruct a life within it due to the prevalence of humanitarian emergency, and its supposedly temporary existence. They can be understood as heterotopias (Foucault 1986).

Such an approach has been discussed and criticised by refugee studies scholars, including Agier himself (2008, 2011a, 2011b), for its lack of historicity and its distance to the empirical reality of refugee camps. The emergence of a specific field of refugee studies, with the creation of the *Journal of Refugee Studies* in 1988, has helped the development of more nuanced conceptualisations. Liisa Malkki, in particular, has called for a re-historicisation of the refugee camps (1992, 1996), and opposed a description of refugees as strictly “uprooted”. Cathrine Brun has also criticised “an essentialist conception of place, suggesting that (...) refugees [must be] regarded as being torn loose from their place and thus from their culture and identity” (2001). Beyond the critical analysis of a humanitarian and security-oriented government, the camps are open to a multiplicity of approaches. The Palestinian camps in the Middle East, and in Lebanon, have provided a fertile context for such approaches.

Scientific scrutiny and the camps: constructing a research in an over-invested field

The Palestinian camps of Lebanon have been an increasingly important space for scientific attention from the mid-1970s onwards, from a broad array of disciplines. Evoking the state of research on Shatila camp only, Mayssun Soukarieh and Stuart Tannock explain how “A simple keyword search of the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) library database in Beirut turns up 223 academic articles and 128 books and academic manuscripts written on Shatila; this is in addition to thousands of media articles, and many documentary films and other reportages” (2013). The creation of the Institute for Palestinian Studies in 1963 in Beirut and subsequently of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* in 1971, as well as the publication of

² The term “liminality” in itself inscribes this scientific perspective in continuity with Michel Foucault’s approach to internment. The theme has been object to several debates in the case of the Palestinian camps of Lebanon, which will be evoked further down. Nonetheless as I inscribe myself in the current, post-Agambian literature on the camps, I do not develop these debates here.

Rosemary Sayigh's first essay on the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon (1979) have given way to a multiplicity of approaches to the refugees as well as to their spaces of living. Conceived as temporary, the camps inserted themselves in complex urban systems marked by a particular mix of formal and informal urbanism (Clerc-Huybrechts 2009), and with time their persistent existence instituted them as the locations where a national history unfolded.

The first approach of oral history and direct testimony, opened by Nafez Nazzal's documentation of the Palestinian exodus to Lebanon (1975, 1978) followed by authors such as Fawaz Turki (1974, 1978, 1988), and Rosemary Sayigh (1979, 1994, 1995) aimed at recording a chronicle of the Palestinian history in Lebanon as it was being lived by the refugees, in a broader context of conscience-making in the 1970s. As explained by Sayigh interviewed by Mayssoun Soukarieh, "We started to disseminate information about Palestine, and our work only increased after the emergence of the resistance movement, which brought an influx of journalists who wanted to write or make films about the revolutionaries" (Soukarieh 2009). This trend was continued most famously in works such as Julie Peteet's (1987, 1996, 2005), or in Bayat al-Hout's on the Sabra and Shatila massacre (2004), Jihane Sfeir's on the early years of Palestinian exile in Lebanon (2008), or to Michael Hudson's on the Lebanese-Palestinian relationship (1997). Other works have highlighted the legal aspect of the question (Al-Natour 1997), the host-refugee relationship (El Khazen 1997; Haddad 2003; Hudson 1997; Nasrallah 1997), the stakes of humanitarian relief (Parsons 1997; A. Robinson 1997; Suleiman 1997; Weighill 1997), and the socio-economic conditions of the group (Abbas et al. 1997; Gorokhoff 1984). These share an interest in the construction of a historical discourse at the human scale, strongly influenced by a mixed approach of fieldwork and archiving. They also an attention to the emergence of a collective memory in Maurice Halbwachs' sense of the term, as attached to a specific locale and the shared representations of a social group (1997 [1950]), which is equally dependent of the political position of the Palestinians in regard to their host society.

Approaches influenced by anthropology and political sociology have, in the meantime, explored the ways in which the camps were spaces where "broader" politics were realised (Ramadan 2013b). Daniel Meier in particular re-inscribed the Palestinian question in post-Civil War Lebanon by showing the relation between the geopolitical evolution of the country and the refugees' place in its political configuration (2008). Studies about the political parties

have shed light on the various aspects of the national liberation movement (Alhaj et al. 2014; Dot-Pouillard 2016), but also increasingly on its transformations. The apparent decline of secular nationalism in favour of “jihadism” has been highlighted in Ain al-Hilweh (Rougier 2007), but also questioned in other countries (Achilli 2014, 2015). After the Civil War, a part of the debate has questioned several tendencies in the camps’ political systems, in particular the development of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)³ (Bianchi 2013; Hanafi 2014; Kortam 2008, 2011; Roberts 2010), but also a shrinking confidence in the Popular Committees (*al-lijān al-ša‘bya* / PCs) and parties (Abou Zaki 2013; Allan 2014; Hanafi 2011a; Issa 2014). The place of non-partisan actors has also been highlighted by Amanda Dias in her work on the “intellectuals of the margins” (2013). At the opposite of an Agambian perspective restricting them to “spaces of exception”, the camps are apprehended as complex socio-spatial units, comprehensible beyond exile.

This draws attention on the role of the camps as spaces of collective memory has been a common theme of investigation as well, which has been approached in diverse manners, but primarily by associating the transformations of the Palestinian refugees as a group to their practices of commemoration, memory, and place work. Laleh Khalili has notably explored the contentious content of commemorative practices in the Lebanese camp of Burj al-Barajneh, attaching it to the evolutions of the transnational Palestinian liberation movement (2004, 2007c, 2007b). Focusing on the importance of memory allows highlighting the representational charge of legitimate discourses about the Palestinian refugees, but also how this legitimacy is an object of competition between Palestinians and hosts (2007a), but also between social groups (Latte Abdallah 2006; Pirinoli 2006), and Palestinian political parties (Ramadan 2009a). The massive installation of non-Palestinians in the camps in the 2010s has also raised the question of the legitimate users of space, and the services provided within this

³ Referred to as NGO-isation following Islah Jad, who described the process as “the changing structures and discourses of Arab women’s movements, in the context of a development discourse based in binaries such as West/East and state/civil society (...) in the context of a broader development trend that views NGOs as a vital vehicle for social change and democratisation” (2004).

space (Abou Zaki 2015). The camps' space and its legitimate representations are therefore defined in struggle. In Ramadan's work, in particular, the interaction between the political and the memorial is associated with the spatial dimension, as visual representations on the camp's walls become the object of struggle.

If space has been seen as a mediation of conflicts, the camps' geography has revealed more diverse phenomena. Mohammed Kamel Dorāi in particular has shown how it mirrors socio-economic relations to the Lebanese territory and extended beyond its border through emigration, showing in particular how much the current spatial organisation of the camps owes to the history of their creation (2006). On another hand, Nicolas Puig has shown how the city/camp divide was experienced in intimate relations to space, but also cultural practices (2008, 2009, 2012). Recent events have also drawn academic attention to the camps themselves as stakes in conflicts, giving weight to a geographic perspective. First, the precariousness of the urban services has led to a conflict between a part of the population and the PC in Shatila in 2005 (Abou Zaki 2013). Second, in the aftermath of Nahr el-Barid's destruction, the camp's importance in individual and collective identities has been stressed as well (Hassan and Hanafi 2010; Ramadan 2010), and the collective actions taken by dwellers have been studied (Hassan and Hanafi 2010). Allan may have made the point for a turn toward geographic approaches the most, considering that "the material conditions of the refugee existence have tended to be occluded" (2014:4) in the existing scholarship: "The contingencies of prolonged exile are producing new forms of subjectivity and belonging rooted in the local environment of Shatila. These emergent forms of identification and community point to dynamically evolving attachments that cut against the grain of officially sanctioned nationalism" (2014:26). Allan describes the Palestinian as refugees of Palestine, but also of the Palestinian revolution (2014:3) which has made the framework for Palestinian politics since the 1960s. This is not necessarily the sign of a depoliticisation of the community, but also of the emergence of practices seen as "latently political; they create structures of affiliation which can be mobilised in moments of political crisis" (2014:31).

During my presence in the camps this impression of opposition between the domain of politics, and in particular the activity of the political parties, or what I call partisan activity, described by informants as "the political" (*as-siyyāsī*), and the issues coming from the material and the everyday has been constantly present. In line with what Sukarieh

and Tannock (2013) described, I was soon confronted to the issue raised by the problem of the revolutionary memory in the camps. Questions on this memory led to quick and stereotypical answers, but also to expressions of lassitude and exasperation. On a daily basis, there appeared to be much more richness and interest in what seemed at first like small, technical issues: the provision of services, the coldness of the camps and its dampness during the winter months, the exasperation in front of the accumulation of garbage, and the anger from learning about accidents from electrical shocks in the streets. Intertwined with other discussions about work, but also about relatives going on vacation or occasionally emigrating, about music, the police, and the constant economic anxiety, formed the concrete ensemble of discussion the people I encountered were engaging with. Simultaneously these matters formed the topics on which the associations and NGOs I was working with focused on.

These matters and their renewed importance both in the politics of daily life and in the scholarship necessarily mirror the described transformation of the camps' relationship to the cities, of which they have become both integrated and marginalised. As such the urban problems worrying my informants were both endemic to the camps, and to Beirut, the Middle East, and the Global South as a whole. The role of urban services has been described by a variety of authors in these contexts. Inequality of access to urban services can be seen as deriving from a general state of socio-economic inequality. Indeed, infrastructure networks interact with socio-political systems and reflect them. This appears at the regional, national, but also local scales. In a notable article on the relationship between Gaza and Jerusalem, Omar Jabary Salamanca notes for example how "The mediating geography of tubes, pipes, wires and corridors that pierces Gaza is thus an essential mechanism to control and regulate any incoming or outgoing flow to the strip" (2011), as Eric Verdeil does, when describing the ways in which electrical inequality in Lebanon mirrors the country's sectarian system (2016). The current arrangement of infrastructure in Beirut has to do with the dynamics of development of the city as a whole, with multiple formal and informal actors participate in urban development (Abu-Rish 2014, 2015; Clerc-Huybrechts 2009; Eddé 2013). Therefore the analysis of the politics of infrastructure is not mechanical, and Melani Cammet and Sukriti Issar described in detail the ways in which parties in Lebanon mediate access to infrastructure in relation to the structuration of communities in the country (2010). For Joanne Nucho, "infrastructure is not a representation, a static diagram of the underlying logics of

sectarianism. Rather, infrastructures are the channels through which the activity or process of sectarianism is produced in specific instances as opposed to other modes of differentiation” (2017:5). Infrastructure is not merely about providing people with water and electricity (or other services), but, as Nucho explains, “it is the very networks of infrastructures, institutions, and services that reproduce particular notions of sectarian belonging and community” (2017:6). The city, in its material sense, is both a way to apprehend and act in the world politically.

Sayigh noted that “Below the surface of current stasis ferments a search for alternative frameworks of national struggle. (...) Though handicapped by formidable obstacles, these currents are compelled by ‘road map’ frustration to try to reconstruct a broader framework of struggle than exists today” (2011). In this thesis I apprehend this subject by looking at the relationship between the space of the camps and collective actions outside of times of crises. I want to investigate how we can comprehend the experience of politics in the camps in relation to their spatiality. To do so, I ask several questions. How can we make sense of the production of space in the camps? What are the relations between the camps and their surrounding areas, and between the camps themselves? What are their relations to Palestine and the Palestinian “diaspora”? What makes the specificity of the camps, from an urban perspective? Who are the relevant actors of the camps’ urban governance⁴? How are those actors constituted? How are activists recruited, what are their similarities and differences, and how do these play out in the “NGO-isation” of the camps? How does the spatial structuration of the camps influence the “appropriate” behaviours within these spaces? What are the specific issues on which these actors mobilise, and how are they related to the structuration of the camps as spaces? How are these issues thematised, problematized, and publicised? What do actors do about those issues, and how do they talk about it? What are the forms of relations to the political implied in what they do? How does the spatial experience of these actors influence what they do? Finally, how

⁴ The term “governance” is subject to debates. I employ it here in strict reference to Sari Hanafi’s definition: “how a camp is managed in terms of relationships to the legal authorities of the host country and to the surrounding municipalities, relationships among groups within the camps and conflict resolution for everyday problems” (2011b:29).

do these actions influence space back by participating to its structuration? In short, *I aim to question the relation between how the camps in post-Civil War Lebanon have been produced as spaces, and the phenomena of contentious action within these camps.*

Social movements, geography, and the refugee camps

- Social movements in the camps

Daily life in the Lebanese refugee camps was meshed with signs of the politics of material life. These were identifiable in the physically embodied routines giving rhythm to the daily life, the little “tricks” and mechanisms that had emerged from the necessities to deal with a precarious physical environment, to secure water and electricity provision, preserve the interiors from flooding, get rid of insufficiently-collected garbage or avoid the risk of getting shocked by a hanging cable while crossing a narrow alleyway. But far from mere coping mechanisms, they also gave place to more organised and public interaction, while not leading to the type of media-covered crises observed in Shatila and Nahr el-Barid. Distant from mass demonstrations and popular challenges to the PCs’ authorities, the cases I am interested in are more discreet, and at first sight less conflictive ones than the election of an alternative PC. They concern collective actors, grouped around formal and informal associations, who took organised actions to try to obtain better conditions of living regarding what I came to call, after the expression had been used regularly in the field, “the problems of the camps”, a broad category of public issues, distinguished from the other issues surrounding the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, such as the right to work and the right to return.

Among the many approaches which have been employed to study the Palestinian camps of Lebanon, one of the least employed may have been Social Movement Theory (SMT). The concept of *social movement* covers a broad category of phenomena defined by Mario Diani with three similarities: “networks of relations between a plurality of actors; collective identity; conflictual issues” (Diani 1992). By extension, it applies to a vast sociological and political literature which has attempted to provide analyses of said phenomena from different theoretical premises. While some parts of the literature on the refugee camps cover topics belonging to the scope of social movements, in particular the politics of commemoration,

collective resistance, and contentious events, the conceptual tools known to SMT, and in particular the three broad approaches in terms of resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977), structures of political opportunities (McAdam 1982), and collective action frames (Snow et al. 1986) have rarely been employed on this particular field, beyond some discussions regarding NGOs (Hammami 2000; Jad 2007).

This difficult importation has been noticed regarding the Middle East in general, especially before the 2010s mass mobilisations of the “Arab Spring”, and attached to a lack of interest for Middle Eastern populations as active political subjects. The Middle East was considered restricted to a form of passive politics, more easily detectable in patronage and alienation, or political violence reducible to “terrorism”, than collective mobilisations (Beinin and Vairel 2011a). In fact, the more critical scholarship has been far from devoid to attention to collective political action in the region, but it has been without directly employing the very “West”-centric concepts of SMT. Asef Bayat’s work has been particularly important in pointing out the existence of popular participation in the region (1997a, 2013). But it has relied on the conceptualisation of *social nonmovements*, understood as “the collective actions of noncollective actors; [those] embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations” (2013:14), rather than “proper” social movements. Thus Bayat situates himself closer to James Scott’s work on popular forms and arts of resistance (Scott 1990) than to SMT scholarship.

This avoidance was supposedly mirrored by the surprise scholars experienced facing the Arab uprisings. This presentation was, as pointed out by Michaël Béchir Ayari, Vincent Geisser, and Abir Krefa (2011), partly incorrect, as just as in their Tunisian examples, a number of social movements have in fact been studied. Compiling a number of these examples, Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel propose that the region “provides a complex and fascinating laboratory, not only to confirm the applicability of SMT but also to enrich our theoretical knowledge of social movements and other forms of political contestation” (2011a:2). In the years following the Arab Springs, it is therefore unsurprising to have seen the body of work on social movements in the region grow noticeably, to cover in particular the revolutionary movements (Alviso-Marino 2016; Chalcraft 2016; Gunning and Baron 2014). The Palestinian refugee

camps of Lebanon, nonetheless, have been left aside, even though SMT had been employed in Palestine itself (Gunning 2010; Parsons 2005; Pettigrove and Parsons 2012; G. E. Robinson 1997).

The main contribution to research I intend to propose relies on the description of camp politics as essentially spatialised and plural, anchored in a pluralist set of interactional grammars. By describing the ways in which they function as constraints for the camp dwellers, and by looking at the camps as contested landscapes, I intend to show in a more precise manner the ways in which the actors relate to the political in public interactions, that is, by having to assume roles in regulated “stages” (Céfaï 1999). I propose that the opposition between various sets of topics, actors, resources, modes of actions, narratives, and spatial representations, is less a matter of a “truer” or “more sincere” political discourse. Nor is it a matter of “depoliticisation” of the Palestinians in Lebanon, but a matter of competition between differently-socialised groups with differently-constituted relations to the public good, anchored in an irreducibly plural world.

What we observe is less the “replacement” of a “narrative” by another, than the opposition between ways of apprehending the social reality by the actors themselves. Looking at the question in an interdisciplinary manner, referring to SMT and human geography, provides us with insight on this question: geography’s main advantage, as I discuss further down the thesis, is its ability to seize the social through its contradictions, its “throwntogetherness”, “its potential for the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories” (Massey 2005: 94). I propose to develop this framework by looking at the question from an interdisciplinary, but also bilingual perspective. Indeed if the debates about space and social movements have existed in the English and French-speaking literatures, these two literatures benefit from being studied in parallel: if Lilian Mathieu (2012) and Camille Hamidi (2006) tackle the English-speaking literature, its debates, beyond Charles Tilly’s work and to an extent the framing debate, appear to have been overlooked. The rupture is even more striking from the English-speaking perspective, where the notable interest for French authors appears to have overlooked major contributions. Neither Michel Dobry’s work on political crises (2009 [1986]), Danielle Tartakowsky’s history of social movements (1997), Olivier Fillieule’s sociology of demonstrations (1997), Cécile Péchu’s sociology of the right to housing (2006), Daniel Céfaï’s contribution to theories of collective action (2007), and Mathieu’s work on

resourceless protest and the space of social movements⁵ (2009; 1999, 2001, 2011, 2012) have been translated in English, or the approaches developed in them, especially, as I will discuss further, the emergence of a French pragmatic approach to SMT, been subject to much scrutiny in the English-speaking debate. This is also the case because of the different evolution of the scientific questions in both linguistic spaces: by multiplying the languages, and therefore the contexts, of scientific discussion, I argue that we also multiply the contents of the scientific “toolboxes” at our disposal.

- Space and mobilisations

The relation between space and the social sciences has been debated as early as the nascent years of modern geography and sociology (Rhein 1982). The “Chicago School” of sociology, and more broadly the first works of sociology in the United States, have provided early examples of spatially-attentive sociology. This was especially the case through the practice of spatially-bounded case studies in urban contexts, notably William Du Bois’s work on Philadelphia (1995 [1899]), and William Foote Whyte’s work on Boston (2009 [1943]). Roderick McKenzie proposes a notable ecological approach to sociology, postulating the gregariousness of humans (1984 [1925]). This spatial sensibility found some echo in the School’s investigation of social movements. In their *Introduction to the science of Sociology*, Robert E Park and William Burgess propose that “The most elementary form of collective behaviour seems to be what is ordinarily referred to as ‘social unrest’. Unrest in the individual becomes social when it is, or seems to be, transmitted from one individual to another, but more particularly when it produces something akin to the milling process in the herd, so that the manifestations of discontent in A communicated to B, and from B reflected back to A, produce the circular reaction described in the preceding chapter” (1969:866 [1921]). Social unrest, a first step for the authors to collective action, is therefore in this approach explained by the physical copresence of a number of individuals.

To an extent SMT constituted itself, in its first formulations, against the social psychology

⁵ The concept does not refer to geographical space in Mathieu’s work.

valued by the Chicago School. Mancur Olson's enunciation of the paradox of collective action (1965) opens a period of reflexion on the rationality of actors and the criticism of the implied self-evidence of mobilisations. This then led to a scientific focus in two directions, either in paying attention to the structuration of activist groups (Oberschall 1973) or to the study of an industry of social movements characterised by an economic analogy (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). What ensues is that, as SMT structured itself in the 1960s and 1970s, it did so relying on a necessary rationalist paradigm which implied little interest for the spatial. Questions about the effects of locality on social movements emerged later, either through the paradigm of the "new social movements" (Evans and Boyte 1992) or that of the structure of political opportunities (McAdam 1982), but taking little inspiration from human geography. Simultaneously, social movements had during that period little interest for the positivist geography which was emerging from the Schaefer-Hartshorne controversy of the 1950s (Hartshorne 1955; Martin 1989; Schaefer 1953), and the publication of William Bunge's *Theoretical Geography* (1962). This current proposed reconstructing human geography as a distinct science of "the spatial" which would reject the importation of other disciplines.

This in return implied little interest for politics beyond the territorial expansion of states. In the earlier periods of regional and positivist geography, as noted by Joe Painter, "the perspective has been somewhat "top-down" – seeing people in their relation to political institutions rather from the starting point of the institutions (such as the state)" (1995:24). Social movements, if they exist in the positivist geographical perspective of the period, must be considered through the questions of location, direction, distance, and connection, which form "a geographic point of view" (Nystuen 1963). Taking the example of an urban riot, Ronald Abler, John Adams and Peter Gould explained that such an event would interest geographers, only insofar as it can be perceived in strict spatial terms: "the social, political, cultural, economic, and psychological contexts are also important, and each gives rise to a distinct science which makes it its business to study and explain such events from its own viewpoint" (1977:55). Although some approaches were developed (Adams 1973; Demko et al. 1973; Sharp 1973)⁶, the positivist movement in geography paid little attention to social

⁶ More recent examples of this trend in the literature can be found in Robert Braun, Ruud Koopmans, Neil Ketchley, and Christopher Barrie's works (Barrie and Ketchley 2017; Braun 2016; Braun and Koopmans 2010).

movements, doing it with tools “rooted in a positivist epistemology and rely[ing] heavily, if usually implicitly, on the theoretical assumptions of the *homo economicus* model of human behaviour” (Miller 2000:2).

The forms of human geography emerging in the late 1970s and early 1980s formed a critique of both this strict separatism, and the ignorance of space in mainstream social sciences. The work by Henri Lefebvre in the late 1960s and early 1970s had begun triggering interest from the social sciences for space, not as a “mere container”, but as a social product which could be apprehended with the tools of critical theory (2000 [1974], 2009 [1967]). Other authors, such as Manuel Castells (1983), Michel de Certeau (2006 [1980], 2010 [1980]), or Pierre Bourdieu (1993) draw similar outlines for spatialising sociological analyses, but Lefebvre’s approach provided an interest by taking space directly as the object of investigation and reconstructing theory from this starting point, because of the centrality of the concept of space in his analysis. In order to delineate the way the social and the spatial interact in the production of space, Lefebvre uses a threefold distinction between different components of space: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived spaces (2000 [1974]). By doing so and re-historicising the spatial question by apprehending it through the question of production, Lefebvre situates the spatial as inseparable from the social, and therefore, reintroduces the question of social relations in geography. Lefebvre’s argument relied on a critique of the illusions of *transparency* and *opacity* that reduce space to either the pure translation of ideas and ideologies in stones, in which case what matters are the ideologies, or it would be an impossible to understand set of “things” and “facts” that fit by itself, in which case there is no point in analysing space (2000:36–38 [1974]). In other words, space should be apprehended as relational, as argued by David Harvey, “as being contained *in* objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects” (1973:12).

This turn was accompanied as soon as the 1980s by a critique of the a-spatiality of the social sciences. As noted by Charles Tilly, “contention always takes place in humanly occupied space, often including the built environment” (Tilly 2000). But this mere observation is not sufficient to make a claim that space is a central part of social movements. Thomas Gyeryn has criticised a mere locational vision to space in sociology (Gyeryn 2000). This remark may have been made more clearly by Doreen Massey, explaining how in the spatial turn “‘space’

was seen as only an outcome; geographical distributions as only the *result* of social processes” (1984:4). Social movement research is no exception to that matter, as it “has tended to treat space as either container or metaphor” (Wilton and Cranford 2002), and to prefer explanations based on historical dynamics, that reduce space at best to the conclusion of social processes. As noted by Choukri Hmed, space is much more a “remote backcloth” on which actions are identified than a mean of explanation (Hmed 2009).

Accounts of the spatiality of social movements build on these remarks, and from the 1990s, with the publication of Dingxin Zhao’s article on the ecology of the student movement in Beijing (1998) onward, the interdisciplinary field studying the relation between the geographical space and social movements emerges, engaging differently the question of space depending on the epistemological engagements of the authors. The topic has been apprehended through a vast array of case studies covering many different situations (Evans and Boyte 1992; Hmed 2007; Ku 2012; Miller 2000; Routledge 1993, 1994, 1997; Wolford 2003; Zhao 1998). Theoretical discussion on how spatiality can be apprehended in relation to SMT has not been neglected (Auyero 2005; Hmed 2008; Martin and Miller 2003; Ripoll 2005b, 2005a, 2008, 2012, 2013; Sewell 2001; Tilly 2000, 2003). Since the early 2000s, attempts to homogenise the field have been taking place as well. Collective works illustrating common perspectives have emerged, in the case of *Mobilization: An International Journal*’s special issue on the topic in 2003, or in recent publications accounting for conferences and workshops (Combes, Garibay, and Goirand 2016; Dechezelles and Olive 2016). This non-exhaustive list aims at showing how scholarship on the question has been diverse and rich. However, it has not aimed at producing a new paradigm in SMT as much as asking the existing theories new questions: “the interest for space in the analysis of collective action remains simultaneously very heterogeneous, scattered, and sparse” (Combes et al. 2016).

- Struggle over space

It is possible to identify several core proposals traversing this literature, starting with the general acception that the physical layout of space influences the forms taken by collective action, which Tilly qualifies as *spatial claim-making* (Tilly 2000). A good example can be found in Routledge's work in the case of Nepal's 1990 revolution. The author notes that one specific way of action, the blackout, relied on the neighbourhoods' shapes: "These [blackouts] were often called during the evening curfews that were imposed by the government in an attempt to quell the movement. (...) They also enabled increasing numbers of people to show solidarity to the movement and to challenge the curfew and join demonstration swarms under cover of darkness with a reduced chance of being identified by security forces" (1997: 77). The author also notes that the leaders of the demonstrations chose consciously to organise their actions in narrow streets and squares that would be harder for the government forces to assault. Hence, the blackout was not only, in terms of outputs, a symbolic act aimed to support the demonstrators, also a tactical use of space, easing protest. Similar observations were made, for example by Zhao, presenting the importance of "milling" within the protected space of the universities before going in the city's streets (1998), or by Wilton and Cranford when observing the importance of intersections in building up a social movement (2002), or in Ramadan's focus on the importance of being physically able to secure a public place in the success of the Tahrir movement (2013a). Copresence in a similar location, as shown by Bayat (Fig 3) can be a source of identification and the emergence of collective identity. To the mere physical layout, studies on *spatial claim-making* add a focus on the symbolic, considering space as imbued with power relations and representations: the layout of a demonstration can be explained by collective memory (Tilly 2003), the symbols of a collective action can be spatially-determined (Alviso-Marino 2016), the necessities of visibility (Geoffray 2016).

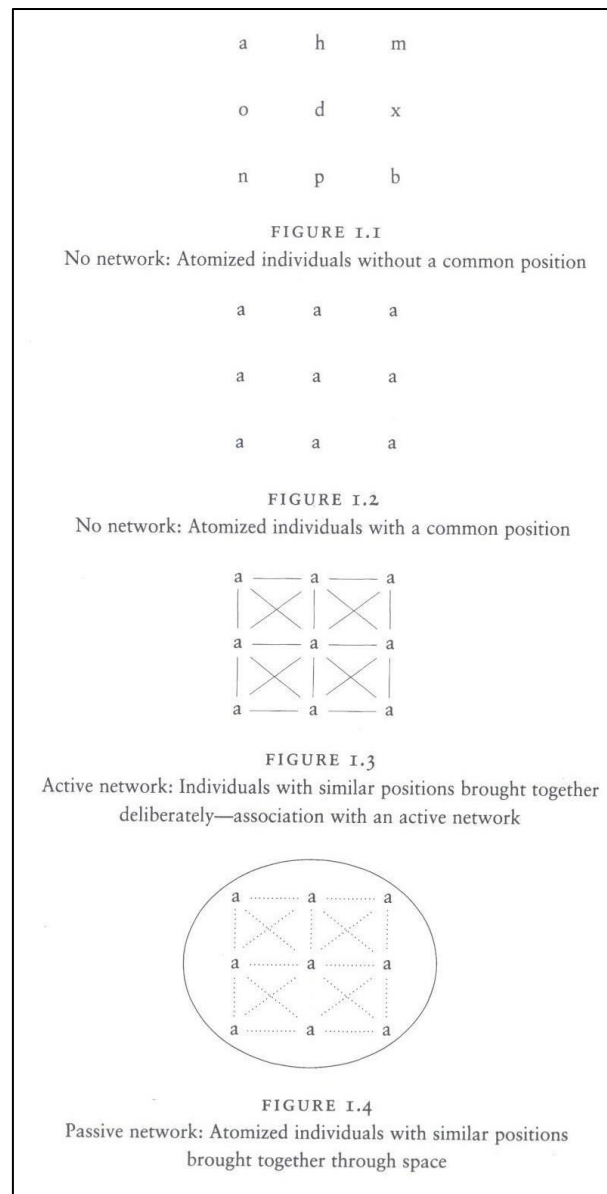


Figure 3: Space as a passive network (Bayat 1997a:18)

Another notable and interesting way to deal with the matter of space in social movements has been to highlight the narrative and representational importance of places. This literature to an extent tackles Gieryn's question, "is there a place-effect as well, in which the tight coupling of geography, built-form, and subjective topological understanding mediates the effects of the size, demographic patterns, and values on the possibility or achievement of the community?" (2000), and pays a particular attention to the representational. The question then becomes how

certain sites appear as points of focus for collective action, either to defend/destroy them, or because collective action itself gives them a political meaning. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's concept of *trial by space*, both John Guidry (2003) and Jeroen Gunning and Ilan Zvi Baron (2014) show the importance taken by the confrontation between discourses and material realities in processes of mobilisation, either to highlight the potentialities of a confrontational political discourse, or to take the spatial as a "witness" of existing social problems. Agnes Shuk-Mei Ku conceptualises place in a similar manner when she shows how in the processes of framing which characterise collective actions, the representations of place, attached to specific social groups, come into play and influence how the mobilised actors eventually represent themselves and their struggles (2012). A similar analysis is made by Danny Trom on conflicts involving nature's preservation (1999), by Stéphane Tonnelat on the career of a pier in New York (2016), or by Tudi Kernalegenn regarding the emergence of a local political identity (2016). These examples share a common interest for what Tilly has qualified as a *place-based* explanation of phenomena, integrating the actors' representations and emotions regarding space.

The practice of space by the mobilised actors can also be a point of focus, highlighting the forms of spatialised resources they rely on. While spatial claim-making described the relationship to the material environment, this approach considers space in a broader sense of the term, through the question of appropriation. Space is comprehended mainly through the question of practice, and the ways in which the actors engage with it through their routines, their investments, but also by simply being in it is put forward (Cefaï and Lafaye 2001). This approach covers a broad spectrum, particularly used to show the importance of procedures and investigations in the unfolding of local social movements (Chabert 2016; Claeys et al. 2016; Rivière 2016; Weisbein 2016), or to show the importance of the control of space in mobilisations (Hmed 2007; Nez 2016). The capacity to define the legitimate spatial divisions and denominations can become, in this approach, the object of the struggle itself (Bandy and Mendez 2003; Carter 2003; Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2016; Hochschild 2010). Although not directly questioning geography, Olivier Grojean's model of transnational mobilisation, which relies on the reconstruction of a transnational actor's "system of interactions" across locations (2008) is another notable example.

Theory and methods: an agenda of research

- For a pragmatic and spatialised approach to social movements

The state of the literature shows how producing theoretical consensus in an interdisciplinary field regrouping two already-divided disciplines is of little interest. Theory appears to be more productive in this sector when employed as a field-oriented set of tools. A part of the literature has concerned itself the concept of place, comprehended as the local mediation of social phenomena, “space filled up by people, practices, objects, and representation” (Gieryn 2000). While for Gieryn this marks an opposition between place and space, it is not the case in Massey’s terms. Massey’s definition of space qualifies it as “the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. (...) [W]e understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space” (2005:9). In this apprehension place fits not in opposition but in complementarity of space: “‘Here’ [place] is where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities (...). But where the succession of meetings, the accumulation of weavings and encounters build up a history. (...) This is certainly not to argue against ‘the distinctiveness of the place-based’, nor – and most particularly – is it to declare ‘that there is nothing special about place after all’. Quite to the contrary: but what is special about place is not the romance of a pre-given collective identity or the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now” (2005:139–40). The spatial can be apprehended as the dimension of social life which supports plurality, the area of unresolved contradictions, more than a mere accumulation of physical stuff.

Being essentially plural, there is in this approach no self-evident “spatial meaning” on which actors would collectively mobilise: “The issue is one of power and politics as refracted through and often effectively manipulating space and place, not one of general ‘rules’ of space and place. For there are no such rules. (...) Rather, there are spatialised social practices and relations, and social power” (Massey 2005:166). This approach is not dissimilar to the

proposition made by Fabrice Ripoll (2013), following discussions by Jacques Lévy (1994) and Vincent Veschambre (2013) concerning the approach to space as a *dimension* of social life:

The only way not to dissolve society or space, i.e. to get out of this alternative, is to interrogate it in order to search for its foundations, at least the intellectual ones. Thus we must reconsider the terms of the question itself, beginning with that of space and the conceptually equivalent ones (but society and the social cannot remain unscathed). Does not debating on the meaning of the relations between ‘society’ and ‘space’, ‘the social’ and ‘the spatial’, the ‘social relations’ and the ‘spatial relations’, etc., presuppose the mutual exteriority of the two terms? Do we not have a tendency to consider space as a thing, separated from society, which is also turned into a ‘thing’ which could exist out of space? Does using terms such as consubstantiality or dialectic suffice to solve the problem?” (Ripoll 2013)

Following this perspective, as Joël Gombin puts it, there is an agreement a priori – regardless of conflicts over its implications – on the epistemological position of space in political science, relying on the affirmation that the divide between the two terms is abstract: “Social and spatial are in this perspective but the two sides of a single coin: ‘the idea of a social and non-spatial object is not a concept, it is an abstraction’” (2014). Beyond the piecemeal methods and concepts provided by a spatialised SMT, such an approach can be the occasion to apprehend this view of the world.

Indeed the debates which traverse SMT indicate since the 1980s the development of a more “cultural” approach to social movements, following in particular David Snow and al.’s proposal on framing processes (Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). The framing approach, has been the umbrella of a broad variety of approaches (Benford 1997; Diani 1996; Johnston 2015; Oliver and Johnston 2005; Snow et al. 1986) building itself on Erving Goffman’s sociology (1983, 1974, 1963, 1982). For framing scholars, to overcome the excessive rationality postulated by the alternative framework of resource mobilisation (Lapeyronnie 1988) as well as the pitfalls of the structuralist approach of political process

(Kriesi 2004), describing the modes of representations of the real⁷ which arise in social movements is necessary to understand their emergence. Having focused first on the question of recruitment, Snow and his fellow framing scholars find that “what is at issue is not merely the presence or absence of grievances, but the manner in which grievances are interpreted and the generation and diffusion of those interpretations” (1986). As Hank Johnston and John Noakes elegantly put it, the framing school emerges from the fact that “Even when oppression is intense or leaders’ tactics open up clear opportunities for action, individuals must be convinced that an injustice has occurred, persuaded that collective action is called for, and motivated to act if a social movement is to occur” (2005:2). As such the framing approach is comprehensible as opposing the other schools of SMT, in particular those focused on resource mobilisation or political process. This is the type of approach proposed by Snow and Benford in particular derives into a fine-grain approach of social movement tactics, denouncing the pitfalls of other approaches in social movements: “They neglect the process of grievance interpretation; they suggest a static view of participation; and they tend to over-generalize participation-related processes” (Snow et al. 1986). The answer proposed by the authors consists in highlighting the various ways in which entrepreneurs of social movements manage to gain resonance between their framings and the representations of other actors. Located at the border of the framing school, Johnston and Oliver promote another take on framing, rejecting the dominant approaches’ reifying tendencies, by which “the cultural beliefs of the targets of these efforts are also viewed as relatively fixed, with framers merely putting the right ‘spin’ on their issue to tap into these fixed preconceptions” (2005). They support a more critical approach to the concept has consisted in returning to Goffman’s original proposal of a frame as something existing at the individual and interpersonal level, an almost-unconscious phenomenon allowing one to comprehend “what is going on here” (Miethe 2009). This essentially displaces the problem of framing, from a tactical process undertaken to “convince” others, to a less neat process of employing methods to understand and make sense of the

⁷ The pragmatics do not take “the real” for granted, while maintaining a realistic position: while the reality is socially constructed, the actors’ engagement with it, which concerns them, postulate that it is not. Therefore, sticking to the actors’ perspectives on the real demands taking their representations seriously (Lemieux 2012; Silber 2003; Thévenot 2001).

world in situation. Lilian Mathieu, marked by a similar “dissatisfaction felt by the recent developments of the analysis of social movements (...) [because of] their inaptitude to describe how things ‘take’, unfold, and crumble” in social movements, calls for “a pragmatic approach – i.e. an approach preferring to study the concrete modalities of accomplishment of actions – of social movements” (2002).

The proposals made by pragmatic sociology, and in particular the pragmatic turn in French sociology which followed the work of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (Boltanski 2012; Boltanski, Darré, and Schiltz 1984; Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 2006). As a whole, pragmatism relies, as explained by Allan, on the tenet “that reality is always in the process of becoming and that the structures of knowledge are continuously being reinscribed through experience and practice” (2014:28). Although it partly relies on this acception, the French pragmatics do not entirely draw on classical American pragmatism, as explained by Søren Jagd:

The notion ‘pragmatic’ does not refer to a direct inspiration from American pragmatism, although an indirect influence may be found through theoretical perspectives inspired, in different degrees, by pragmatism, such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. Rather, the term pragmatic refers to linguistic pragmatics, stressing the actors’ use of grammatical resources facing situations in which they find themselves. (...) The research program of pragmatic sociology is developed as an alternative to Bourdieu’s critical sociology. Critical sociology is seen as ignoring or underestimating actors’ critical competencies. (...) For pragmatic sociology, empirical studies of disputes involving questions of justification constitute a starting point for studying action. (2011)

This perspectives have been put forward by scholars like Lilian Mathieu in SMT for their conceptual capacity to reconstruct the sense of collective mobilisations from the perspective of the actors, by focusing on the concrete ways in which these actors produce their actions: “The first idea we propose is that participating in a collective action depends on a particular order of practices and more importantly demands from the engaged individuals to master pragmatic capacities and know-hows” (2002). This current finds its inspiration in linguistics rather than the philosophical school of pragmatism, while finding some common ground on the rejection of formalism in particular, as discussed by Yann Kréplak and Cécile Lavergne (2008). Pragmatic sociology is influenced by pragmatism through the “mediation” of

ethnomethodology: “one of the visible consequences of the diffusion of pragmatist thought in the social sciences resides in the critique of a dominant and now academic conceptual network: structure, domination, alienation, habitus, are replaced by concepts judged more flexible like actors, interactions, processes of cooperation and competition, communication, etc.” (Lavergne and Mondémé 2008). This does not mean a return to theories of strict rationalities, nonetheless. Instead, pragmatic sociologists consider the social actors as depending on a plurality of rationalities, not dissimilar to Charles Wright Mills’ *vocabularies of motives* (Campbell 1991; Mills 1940; Trom 2001): “The strategy of pluralism obliges the pragmatic sociologist to take on the task of constructing systems of coherent actions which can account for the diversity s/he encounters in his/her fieldwork” (Bénatouïl 1999). We are therefore confronted with the task of reconstructing a bounded multiplicity of frameworks which allow the actors to perceive the real, through moments called *tests*, “any situation during which the actors experience of social order’s vulnerability, from the very fact that they feel doubt about what reality is” (Lemieux 2012). This turn has a particular interest when it comes, therefore, to working on moments of conflicts, when the nature of what is going on is being openly questioned, such as is in the case of social movements.

What matters therefore is to reconstruct the overall context in which collective actors mobilise and the scientific story (Becker 1998) of their collective actions from this perspective. An example of such an approach can be found in Ulrich Oslender’s work on the Colombian Pacific lowlands (2004, 2016). Oslender criticises merely situating social movements in space to give a “particular taste and smell” to social phenomena. In his study, Oslender conceives the notion of “aquatic space”, “the particular assemblage of spatial relations that results from human entanglement with an aquatic environment” (2016:47) and which provides the meaningful context for the observed mobilisations. Although the activists I work on are not similar to Oslender’s informants, I take inspiration from his proposal to explore the relationship between space as a broad context and the primary way for the social actors to access the social, and their actions.

From this basis I propose to put at the centre of the analysis a framing approach informed by concern for the spatial, following the pragmatic framework. This approach, as it has been illustrated in pragmatic studies of social movements, in particular Thévenot, Moody, and Lafaye’s work on environmental activism (2000), or by Lilian Mathieu’s research agenda on

the “space of social movements” (2002, 2012), does not imply neglecting the other concepts in SMT, but reformulating them in a comprehensive manner, as illustrated by Hanspeter Kriesi for the question of political opportunity structure, taking into account the cultural models by which the actors perceive and select elements of the political opportunity structure to make strategic choices (2004). This also means returning to the concepts of resource and opportunity, reconsidering them through this approach. The pragmatic approach can make sense of the entire “toolbox” proposed by SMT, while retaining its essential perspective. In the rest of this thesis, and to make the theoretical discussion as fruitful as possible, I have organised the chapters in dialogue, following the model of a foliation. To maintain a constant coming and going between the literature and the empirical observations, I have inserted the discussion of the relevant theoretical points at the beginning of each appropriate section, while maintaining the coherence of the approach proposed here.

- Methods and limits

This thesis is based on a total of nine months of qualitative investigation conducted in the three main Palestinian camps of the Beirut municipality, Shatila, Mar Elias, and Burj al-Barajneh. I realised two field trips of respectively six and three months, from November 2014 to May 2015, and from January to April 2016. I chose to focus on the urban units of the camps, rather than on specific groups in them. Indeed, one of the first distinctions that emerged in the field concerned the opposition between the main groups in the camps: Palestinian-Lebanese (*Falasṭīnī-lubnānī*), Palestinian-Syrian (*Falasṭīnī-sūrī*)⁸, Syrian, Lebanese, and Asian dwellers, the last two groups being the less visible in my fieldwork. According to some of my informants’ estimations less than half the population of the Beirut camps was Palestinian-Lebanese. Therefore this work is not about Palestinian refugees as much as about the camps. Yet these qualifications have their effects, as has been discussed by

⁸ The terms *Falasṭīnī-lubnānī* and *Falasṭīnī-sūrī* were used in the field systematically, and due to the fact, in part, that the Palestinians from Syria could claim different forms of support from the Palestinians from Lebanon, while being still considered as Palestinians in terms of political and historical belonging. Unless specified otherwise, the term will not in this thesis cover the English meaning of dual citizenship.

Abou Zaki (2015), and will be employed in the analysis.

The location of the study was chosen on the basis of several elements, including my own social networks prior to the fieldwork. Having never lived or worked in the camps prior to the study, I relied on my experience of Beirut, of nongovernmental organisations, and my relations with a part of the research community in the capital and in my host institutions to enter the camps, taking into account the short time span available for the realisation of the work. Beyond the practicalities of fieldwork, the camps of the Beirut municipality presented particularities which made them relevant for the questions I was aiming to investigate. First, I aimed to avoid camps that had been marked by either a recent political crisis or had been the object of an increased scientific attention around the question of security and “jihadism”, as had been the case of both Ain al-Hilweh and Nahr al-Barid when the fieldwork began in 2014. Looking at camps where no “exceptional” events had been occurring also reduced the risks linked to over-researchedness, which causes a considerable researchee fatigue and the development of stereotypical responses. Second, the proximity of the camps to the location of the Lebanese government made it very easy for the activists I encountered to participate in the big Palestinian demonstrations, especially of the campaign for the right to work, which regularly took place in Beirut. This would, I expected, allow me to observe the relation, if it existed, between local social movements and other components of the sector of Palestinian social movements in Lebanon. The translocal relation between the camps, analysed in Chapter Four, could thus be aborded. Third, the Beirut camps were both relatively easy to access and sufficiently close to one another to allow the investigation to take place in several camps, rather than relying on a single-sited work.

Indeed, following Arjun Appadurai’s work in anthropology (1990, 1993, 2003, 2010), the consideration given in ethnographic work to the question of mobility has increased, leading to the emergence of a practice of multi-sited ethnography proposed by George Marcus. This method aimed at producing anthropological knowledge in a globalised perspective. In a globalised perspective “The distinction between lifeworlds of subjects and the system does not hold, and the point of ethnography within the purview of its always local, close-up perspective is to discover new paths of connection and association by which traditional ethnographic concerns with agency, symbols, and everyday practices can continue to be expressed on a differently configured spatial canvas” (1995). This method is recommended

for the study of migrants, culture and communication, new technology, environmentalism and transnational movements: “The point is that the paradigms of globalization and its cousin, transnationalism, no doubt posed the major twentieth century challenge to ethnographic methods of inquiry and units of analysis by destabilizing the embeddedness of social relations in particular communities and places” (Falzon 2009). The activists I was working on were not mobile at a transnational level, but they certainly were not camp-bound either. While my project had begun with the intention of constructing a cross-camp comparison, observing the routines, but also interrogating the residential trajectories and representations of the informants, it appeared more interesting to apply Marcus’ method to “follow the people” (1995). My informants regularly visited other camps and the city, most of them had lived in and outside of several camps across their lives. They went to work or to the university outside of the camps on a daily basis, and frequented the city for their leisure.

I began my work sampling selectively, by contacting scholars and associations, composing an “outer circle” of temporary informants able to redirect me toward more adequate groups through the usual tool of snowballing. The third main mode of sampling was by relying on my spatial presence and attention to what happened, thus allowing opportunistic sampling. In the early stages of the investigation I multiplied the modes of entry, even being redirected toward the same person by several others, as a way to avoid being associated too quickly with a “clique” (although it happened, unavoidably, later in the field). After which I proceeded by the method of snowballing, until the groups I was interested in studying were entirely met or access was explicitly denied to me. Thus I hoped to reconstruct not necessarily cases representative of the camps, but “real social groups” (Weber and Beaud 2010) to be studied in and of themselves. The risk of drawing conclusion on the representativeness of findings in qualitative research has been adequately described by Olivier de Sardan: “Fieldwork investigation speaks the most often of representations and practices, not of the representativeness of representations and practices. It allows describing the space of common or eminent representations or practices in a given social group, with no possibility of assertion on their statistical distribution (...). One must not make fieldwork investigation say more than what it can give. Thus it can propose a description of the main representations that the main local groups of actors have about a given ‘problem’, no more and no less” (2008:96–97). To

anchor the findings in a broader discussion, returns to the theory and abstraction – what Becker calls “Bernie Bern’s trick” (1998:172–76) were used as ways to generalise.

The bulk of the material studied here has been gathered following the rules of qualitative sociology, combining the two main methods of participant observation and semi-directive interviews, or as Stéphane Beaud would call the method, ethnographic interviews, inscribed in a relatively long period of qualitative observation, punctuating it, and apprehended in its continuity: “The situation of interview is in itself an observation scene, or to be more precise the observation of the social scene (people and places) constituting the interview give elements for its interpretation” (1996). Employing this method, I conducted around fifty formal interviews lasting between 20 minutes and two hours, thirty-eight of which were recorded. The interviews were primarily conducted with activists, but also PC members, the spokesperson for UNRWA in Beirut, members of political parties, local experts, and “persons of good reputation” who had been pointed out by the activists. The others were not recorded but transcribed as precisely as possible. Approximately twice as many informal discussions and countless hours of presence must be added to that corpus.

These interviews completed the work of observation which resulted in the writing of a systematic fieldwork diary. Both the formal interviews and field diary were consulted at the end of the fieldwork, and the excerpts provided in this thesis are formed of exemplar cases of typical observations and replies⁹. I follow the epistemological perspective defended by Beaud (1996), but also by scholars such as Nina Eliasoph (1990, 1998) which proposes considering the informants’ responses not as “their opinion”, but in relation to the context of interview. The issue of the interviewee’s trustworthiness is therefore set aside in favour of the question of why they choose, in the specific situation of interaction, to reply in a particular way instead of another. Because of the question of language, I have relied on three interpreters to conduct certain interviews, all of which were recorded. I have followed Gerald Berreman’s (1962)

⁹ Like all qualitative work, the results proposed here aim at being representative not of the Palestinian camps of Lebanon as a whole, but of the case study. When necessary I have added footnotes specifying in which interviews beside the one quoted similar terms had been heard. The quoted examples are chosen utterances of repeated observations.

advice on working with interpreters in these situations, integrating the interpreters' position into the analysis and treating work with them as a temporary phase before I could conduct my interviews in Arabic without support: "the debate does not lie between working or not with interpreters, but on how, in a period of learning the local language and constrained by time, interpreters are an alternative which can be used for producing certain types of data in specific ways. Working with interpreters is at the same time as one of the tools available in the approach of the field, and as a limited, flawed method which cannot in any way replace the knowledge of the local language" (Mahoudeau and Mirman *tbp*). I have systematically changed the names of the interviewees to maintain anonymity while still allowing the readers to keep a track on who is talking at any point of the thesis.

Observation led to confrontation with ethical conundrums. At the time of the fieldwork the camps, even more so than the rest of the municipality, were in a situation of severe housing crisis, having to face the arrival of several thousands of refugees from Syria. In such a context it quickly became clear that seeking housing in one of the camps, either in a separate room or someone's home, would have meant appropriating a scarce space. I compensated that difficulty of not being able to live in the camps by being present as much as possible in the studied groups, especially in the everyday activities, although I also participated in small and bigger-scale gatherings and demonstrations, as well as events organised by the groups, such as public debates, conferences, workshops, training sessions, etc. This more conventional corpus was accompanied by the occasional use of other methods. I conducted a number of walking interviews to question the urban practice and representations of chosen activists (Clark and Emmel 2010; Evans and Jones 2011), and took as many photographs as was possible without becoming a nuisance to the camp dwellers. Finally, I collected as systematically as possible any document, poster, leaflet, report, or other source of archival material I could find in the field. When adequate, these documents were scanned and integrated into the thesis.

- Core networks of informants: Three associations in the Palestinian camps of Beirut

Fieldwork was focused on, but not restricted to, three main groups of actors in the camps. The choice of focusing on these groups came from methodological opportunism as well as the focus on urban questions. These groups, their history, and their structuration, are described in detail in Chapter Two, but will be introduced here briefly. How each group was approached in the development of the fieldwork will particularly be stressed.

The first group to be approached, via academic networks, was the Palestinian Youth Network, or PYN. The core member of the PYN, Mansour, was in contact with the academics I knew in Beirut and was approached first on order to assess the situation of the camps. As such, Mansour played in the first months of the fieldwork the role of a gatekeeper. Interest in the PYN's activities only developed with time. Created in the early 2010s, the PYN mostly worked as a network of camp-based associations, and was funded by Mansour's employing company, specialising in development consultancy and funding. The most common story

about the network's creation described it as having emerged following a violent incident in one of the camps, during which a young man had been killed. The network's structuration would have started as a way to connect separate community-oriented actions in the camps. Formally speaking, the PYN's membership was composed of one association per camp, represented by its leaders and cadres. The member associations were generally engaged in educational or community-support activities, and thus the PYN could effectively rely on a relatively broad network of beneficiaries to talk to. Although in principle the three different components – the network, the company, and the associations – were separated, in practice the distinction between them was occasionally left fuzzy, partly because most members were simultaneously engaged in all. Besides, the PYN constituted a network of sociability as much as of militancy. The core members of the PYN were also generally marked by very similar political discourses and, for most of those encountered, a similar disappointment in the experience of partisan engagement, mostly in Fateh. They also shared very frequent meetings, aimed at training them as well as maintaining the group's cohesion. Due to the variety of its member organisations, the PYN was concerned with a number of actions, ranging from the organisation of educational support to self-help urban improvement of the camps, and including occasional moments of contentious action.

The second organisation to be approached, Najdeh al-Ijtima'ieh (shortened as "Najdeh" in the rest of the thesis) has been present in the camps since 1976, similarly through academic contacts. Najdeh was created to support the victims of the Tal al-Zaatar massacre during the Lebanese Civil War, and recognised formally by the Lebanese state in 1978. Najdeh's activities were historically focused on the support to women, especially through the organisation's original embroidery project, which aimed at providing work, community, and resources to Palestinian women. Although originally associated to the DFLP, with time the organisation distanced itself from the party and reoriented its focus toward women's rights and educational activities, including the management of kindergarten, but also toward the question of the right to work, the association having been one of the actors in the campaign for the right to work started in 2009, and more recently for camp improvement, mostly via the importation in Lebanon of a Cash for Work model in the implementation of a garbage collection project in Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh. Najdeh's organisation relied on two separate hierarchies. The first one was structured on a territorial basis, with local offices

situated in each camp; the second project-based, with several offices in Beirut dedicated to specific branches of Najdeh, such as the one focused on gender-based violences.

The third main approached organisation, Markaz al-Naqab, was encountered through snowballing. Opposite to the two others, Naqab was located only in one camp and consisted in a very small number of members, operating mostly around the eponymous community center in Burj al-Barajneh. Contrarily to the other groups too, the association's members strictly refused to be associated to NGOs and to international or external funding, which they considered as pulling activists' focus away from the local community. To sustain its activities the PYN, which was essentially a merger of two previously-existing networks, mostly organised fundraisers. Beside its educational aspect, the center also aimed at being a cultural meeting point, and the members organised talks and film screenings on matters concerning political topics and forms of resistance.

Overview

The rest of this thesis will be divided into four main analytical chapters, each divided into parts, sections, and sub-sections.

Chapter One will begin by describing the production of the space of the camps following the proposed framework. I will rely on the tools offered by human geography, and in particular of the geography of landscapes, to show how the camps are social, historical, and political products the evolution of which has been influenced by a plurality of factors. I will rely on historical accounts of the camps' evolution as well on my own fieldwork to discuss the relation between the camps and the city of Beirut, and the particularity of the post-Civil War period in relation to previous ones. I will also propose that the camps can be described as plural spaces similar to Massey's "collection of stories-so-far", and describe the different representations of space which cohabited in the field. I will show how these stories, far from existing merely in the dwellers' heads, can be traced in the very material fabric of the places they inhabit, forming as many situation saliences for them to mobilise in their daily spatial practices. I will also describe the urban governance of the camps referring to Warren Magnusson's proposals, describing it essentially as a system of interaction organised around

the camps as sites. Finally, I will propose an elaboration of a model of grammars of interaction, to analyse the studied engagements.

Chapter Two will focus more directly on the question of the studied collective actors, by relying on a qualitative description of the groups I have worked with, to try to analyse what is at play in the phenomenon of the “NGO-isation” in the camps. I will begin by reconstructing the “NGO sector” in the camps, showing how this broad category unveils a variety of actors and collective trajectories, with very little coherence between those. I will show how the qualification of “social movements” is possible, but does not suffice to describe the organisations. I will also define these groups’ collective identity, as well as the forms of politicisation at play within them. Finally, I will look at how the organisations anchor their existence in place, constructing themselves as legitimate local actors.

In Chapter Three I approach the question of the “problems of the camps” and the mobilisations surrounding them more directly. I will rely for this chapter on the sociology of public problems to show what is at stake in the production and reproduction of a localised category of problems such as the “problems of the camps”. Far from self-evident, these problems are the result of the activists’ activity of framing, relying on proof and resources; which involves asserting responsibility for the problems. The actions undertaken by the activists to construct public problems in the camps and publicise them in a certain manner are at the same times actions to qualify “culprits” for these problems, and therefore will be described as a work of public denunciation.

Finally, Chapter Four will operate a “return to space”. Having looked at the “problems of the camps” and the actors operating around those, I will ask the question of the effects of their actions on space, and the ways in which they transform it incrementally. This question will be approached by two different angles. I will begin by questioning the relationship between the activists’ attempts to produce an acceptable denunciation and scale, showing how producing a specific translocal scale is essential to their mobilisation. Second, I will show how the studied movements have an effect on the collective spatial representations in and of the camps, by proposing alternative urban discourses about these spaces.

Chapter 1: Assembling power and space in the camps

Entering Mar Elias camp marks a visible transition from one space to another: using the camp's main gate, at the Unesco building, one faces the former convent's gated entry. Further down the road, a passage into the camp itself is surrounded by several murals depicting symbols of Palestinian nationalism, particularly a large painting of Yasir Arafat. In my first visits in 2015, part of the street stayed in the shadow of a large Palestinian flag hung above it. Proceeding deeper into the camp, the urban experience continued to change, from the streets of the capital's space to the camp's. Streets became narrower and maze-like, the "web" of bundled electrical cables and water pipes more dense, one could notice the such or such political organisation's slogans on the walls, as well as the logos of several of these organisations –UNRWA schools, Ghassan Kanafi Foundation's kindergarten, PC, etc. – investing the physical space with symbols. One would also glimpse consensual slogans and themes associated with the Palestinian national struggle – flags, maps of Palestine, representations of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa, Handhala¹⁰, etc. –, evocations of agrarian themes and of the imagined traditional landscape of Palestine, such as trees, leaves, or fake stone walls. Similar images could be seen in Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh.

Beyond national imageries, the camps' space also reflected misery, deprivation, and traces of past conflicts: the very aspect of the built environment, marked by holes in the street, partially-destroyed buildings in some places, and the accumulation of garbage at some street corners. This was not only visual: in the winter, the change in temperature and humidity between the city and the camp was particularly palpable, and following heavy rain some of

¹⁰ Handhala is a fictional character created by the Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali. Represented as a child – born at ten years old and never ageing – dressed in rags and barefooted, hands crossed behind his back, which the character almost always turns towards the audience, Handhala is one of the allegorical representations of the Palestinian refugees (Al-Ali 2009).

the camps' streets flooded for lack of infrastructure. Animals such as half-wild cats and rats accompanied the smell of garbage bags left in the streets because they were too scarcely collected. These first experiences as a researcher and outsider were reinforced by the preconceived image of the Palestinian camps as "landscapes of hope and despair". This first experience and impression – associated with mixed feelings of fear, excitement, and sympathy – came to become a subject of shame and, further on, of joke with some interviewees.

Reducing the camps to marginality, struggle, violence, resistance, economic activity, or the discreet rhythm of everyday life leads to the risk of falling into over-interpretation by obsession with coherence (Olivier de Sardan 2008). These different dimensions coexist in the experience of the camps, leaving us with the question of the importance of this coexistence in the production of space.

In this chapter I will look at the co-constitution of spatial and social representations in the Palestinian camps, attempting to reconstruct a scientific story (Becker 1998:31–34). I return to the historical relation between the camps and the host society. The different "periods" which have marked this evolution constitute as many layers deepening the representations of the camps. In the current period, the camps constitute at the same time areas of political marginalisation and social integration of their dwellers. Their material aspect, the way they interact with the city of Beirut, and their integration into the urban system of Beirut are explored. The camps are also seen symbolically, traversed by a multiplicity of landscapes which give them their sense as places, which I define as essentially plural. This plurality is also present in the second part of the chapter, on power¹¹ in the camps, relying on the conceptions of local government proposed by Magnusson (1996, 2011, 2014; 2003). In the last part of the chapter I discuss the coexistence of several pragmatic regimes of interaction in the camps.

¹¹ I refer to the concept in Max Weber's classical definition of the term in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, as translated by Isidor Walliman: "Within a social relationship, power means any chance, (no matter whereon this chance is based) to carry through one's – individual or collectif – own will (even against resistance)" (1977).

I. From spaces of refuge to spaces of identity: placing and making sense of the camps in post-war Lebanon

We are sitting in the office of Najdeh's Cash for Work program in Shatila with Tariq for a few hours when the workers start coming in. There is quickly the usual group in the office, discussing various topics, mostly related to work in the camps and the tasks Tariq and his coworkers undertake before the beginning of the cleaning sessions. Tariq has had a number of conflicts and situations of incomprehension that morning and takes this opportunity to let out some tension in a pacified context. Most jokes revolve around the dwellers passing by the office every day to get into the project, and the amount of paperwork this activity involves: "This guy, I asked him where he was from, he says 'Shatila'. So I ask, 'But where in Shatila?', he says 'Shatila the camp!', but I said 'Where, where in Shatila camp? Where is the building?' and he goes 'Oh! You see if you go this way, that way, around that building and it will be there!', they always do that!". As everyone was laughing at the situation, Tariq turned to me and, in English: "You see Alex, we don't know where we are, the streets don't even have names!". (Fieldwork diary¹², February 2016)

These jokes are only one instance in a continuum of anodyne remarks on the space of the camps. They are not restricted to people like Tariq and his coworkers, who are mostly Palestinian-Syrians, and in the camp for a few years at most. One can think of the absence of maps of the camps, except for partial documents, generally out of date, and made by camp dwellers themselves. The camp's boundaries are often subject to confusion, even for the dwellers: after a meeting of the Palestinian Youth Network (PYN), the members who had invited me, entered a debate on whether a certain street was a part of the camp or not, drawing small maps to support each side of the argument. For a single interviewee or informant, the camp seemed, depending on the moment, to cover a different surface: in the case of the members of the Cash for Work programme, for example, the camp generally extended in the

¹² Referred to in the rest of the text as FD.

adjacent area¹³ when discussing daily life (UN-Habitat and UNDP 2010), while in the context of the project, the boundaries were stricter. Telling when one was or not in the camp, where in the camp one was, and identifying the meanings of that spatiality is not clear for the visitor, and its apparent chaos was regularly described by dwellers. Having lived for several years in Shatila, Tariq and most of his interlocutors were knowledgeable of the general layout of the camp. Their false surprise in front of a common way to indicate one's home was more a moral than a practical judgement.

In this first part, I will focus on the question of the production of space, via the political and social relations which influence it. The evolution of the camps can be apprehended in parallel to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, following the classical models in terms of “generations” and “eras” proposed by the literature thus far. These “eras” form ideal-types of relations between the Lebanese and Palestinian societies in Lebanon at given moments of history. I will then present the camps as they were during the fieldwork. By describing the relations between the camps and the city, I show the way in which the camps are in Beirut both a space of integration and marginality. The specificity of the camps, compared to the rest of the city, will be described in the last section, in which I will present the various landscapes inscribed by the social practice of space which give to the camps their specific “sense of place”.

¹³ Areas “located in direct proximity or adjacency around the boundaries of official Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon” (UN-Habitat and UNDP 2010:8). Although not officially part of the camps, their statuses and concrete access to urban services are often influenced by this proximity.

A. The camps in Lebanon, a history of power relations

Encampment has been the condition of life for a part of the Palestinian community in Lebanon since the late 1940s, as well as other social groups in Lebanon. As such, Lisa Malkki, talking about Hutu refugees in Burundi, warns against a conception of refugee-ness limiting it to mere “uprooted-ness” and proposes to focus instead on identities’ reactualisations (1992). The Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, are also marked by what Brun calls reterritorialisations, “the way displaced and local people establish new, or rather expand networks and cultural practices that define new spaces for daily life” (Brun 2001). These processes have been depending on the evolution of the relation between the host and the refugee communities, but also influenced by a variety of other actors and events participating in the definition of the Lebanese political configuration.

The three camps were founded through the gathering of Palestinian families on land made available by local benefactors during the *Nakba* (catastrophe), and officialised after the creation of UNRWA. This informal origin still transpires in their names. Both in the case of Shatila and Mar Elias they mirror the name of the actors having founded them – in one case the land being lent by a local proprietor called Shatila, in the other made available by the local convent of Mar Elias – before their management was overtaken by organisations such as the ICRC and UNRWA, and the Second Bureau between 1948 and 1952. From the start, the camps have always been governed as urban units much less according to a single, written, and clear status, than following the changes in political relations between various groups. The history of the camps, and the way this history has been interpreted and reinterpreted both by research and the camp dwellers themselves, indicates clearly this evolution through time.

The hosts and the guests: Palestinian eras in Lebanon

If urban marginalisation is recurrent in the history of the camps in Lebanon, their status has evolved from the arrival of the refugees in the late 1940s, mirroring the position of the Palestinians in the Lebanese political configuration and history. This remark is first made by Rosemary Sayigh, showing how the “images” and identity refugees had shifted from rural populations to refugee, and to revolutionaries (1979). The approach inspired other researches, from which a common academic but also popular story of the camps emerged. Variations in the narrative are mostly linked to the fact that this story is based at first on the urban and social representations of the Palestinians themselves. As Julie Peteet puts it, “[l]ocal Palestinian periodization articulates the camps’ shifting borders, the kinds of social relations they contained, and the identities that took hold. Rapid rearrangements in scale, whether externally or internally generated, signalled shifts in the empowerment of the refugee community vis-à-vis the host” (2005:95).

This periodisation illustrates how the everyday representations of the refugees of the camps and their historical situation reflect wider-scaled relations of power which are made sense of via the reference to previous experiences, and representations of the camps from political actors both inside and outside them. Illustrating how the constructions of the Palestinians as a community and of the camps as a space are intertwined, Peteet speaks of *days* (*ayām*) and *generation* (*ǧīl*). The first term expresses a political period in the history of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the second how, for certain actors, this evolution in terms of periods influences not only the ways to relate to Palestine, to exile and to the camps, but also the types of behaviour: “Generations were marked by particular temporal events. Experiences imprinted characteristics and identity on a generation and behaviour was often referenced to them. For instance, mothers attributed their children’s naughty behaviour to ‘*ayyam al-harb* (days of war) when domestic and schooling routines were severely disrupted” (2005: 95-96). I will present this periodization, in relation to the camps’ space.

The “Lebanese period”, from the “catastrophe” to the Cairo Agreement (1948 – 1969)

Nakba constitutes for Jihane Sfeir “the founding event, the landmark for the constitution of an exiled people and nation” (2006). Yet, though thought of as an event, the arrival of the Palestinians in Lebanon actually occurs as a process of complex migrations to and from Palestine, eventually leading to the settling of a part of the Palestinian refugee population in the camps. As both Sayigh (1979) and Kamel Doraï (2006) report, the “great dispersion” of the Palestinian population, its arrival in the neighbouring countries, and the concentration of part of this population in a variety of spaces (former Armenian camps, squatted pieces of land, abandoned military infrastructure or in some cases ruins), some of which would eventually become refugee camps, was not organised.

The first years of the Palestinian refugees’ presence in Lebanon were dominated by a variety of actors, among which the Lebanese state, the League of Societies of the Red Cross and, after its creation, UNRWA. Souheil al-Natour reports how the refugees’ presence was conceived as temporary: “the government was agreed to regulate the Palestinian presence in Lebanon as a special case separate from that of other foreign communities in the country. (...) [T]his issue would not extend beyond brotherly solace and quick and temporary assistance” (1997). In the context of emergence of a consociational regime marked by the National Pact (Traboulsi 2007), the presence of a large amount of Sunni Muslims was perceived as a threat. The period was also that of the development of the humanitarian management of the camps by UNRWA. The Agency, marked by severe budgetary issues, presented a miserabilist discourse on the refugees. In “Palestine Refugees Today”, a series of newsletters published from 1960 to 1990 by the Agency, it represented the Palestinians through images of suffering and deprivation, for instance of underfed babies on weight scales (UNRWA 1970:3), of the precariousness of the shelters (UNRWA 1971:6), of a child holding a tin pan of stew associated with the comment “I was hungry and you fed me” (UNRWA 1971:24), but also as beneficiaries of the various relief projects organised by the Agency: vocational training (UNRWA 1970:10), youth activities (UNRWA 1970:29), or education (UNRWA 1971:20).

The refugees were thus under a regime of humanitarian and containing government by external actors. Approximately from 1948 to the mid-1960s, relief – and later, urban solidification – policies towards the camps from UNRWA were accompanied by a severe mechanism of control from the Lebanese state. As Gorokhoff notes, “the defiance of the Lebanese authorities towards the Palestinians increases noticeably. The Deuxième Bureau created by General Chehab to control the activities of the Lebanese opponents tracks thoroughly what happens in the Palestinian camps and attempt to prevent unrest” (1984). This control took the form of a general containment of the refugees to the camps, and occasional phases of violent repression (Sayigh 1979:133–34). The repression concerned other elements of Palestinians’ lives in Lebanon, including the right to work. Although some refugees themselves opposed urban development seen as resettlement (Turki 1974), the repression attempted to prevent the existing forms of self-improvement: “People’s first concern was their homes: to make them rainproof, provide outlets for waste water and sewage, enlarge them to accommodate growing families or to protect their privacy with an outer wall. Such improvements were strictly forbidden” (Sayigh 1994:70).

From the Cairo Agreement to the War of the Camps (1969 – 1982)

Peteet situates the turning point for the beginning of the “revolutionary” period of the camps to be the battle of al-Karameh in 1968 (2005: 132). For Lebanon more specifically, the Cairo Agreement in November 1969 marked a turning point: “The accord recognised the armed *fida’iyin*’s right to be present on and move around Lebanese territory, especially to and from the ‘Arqub region, and provided a form of extra-territoriality for the Palestinian camps” (Traboulsi 2007: 154). For the camps, the “period of the revolution” or the “Palestinian period”, marked the arrival and the rise to power of the PLO, and a radical change in the way the refugees presented themselves. After the state’s attempts to get rid of the political groups in the camps, Sayigh illustrates how the period saw the political parties and the PLO becoming essential actors in the camps and imposing their discourses (1994: 91–93). The period was also marked by a relative change in the village organisation that had marked the restructuration of the camps after the *Nakba*, by the traditional leaders, not directly challenged by but facing the arrival of party cadres in the camps.

The PLO's influence was felt in a number of economic and urban effects, at first because of the de facto disappearance of the restrictions over construction, granted the camps did not expand beyond their designated areas: "From the 1970s onwards, the PLO's management of the camps galvanises construction in the camps. Buildings with one or two stories appear. The densification of the camps is twofold: horizontal, via the sprawl in interstitial, undeveloped spaces, and vertical, via the adjunction of one or two stories" (Doraï 2006: 60). Yet the influence of the presence of the PLO went beyond the mere authorisation of private construction and involved the extending the plans of urban, public infrastructure which had been undertaken by UNRWA in the previous decade, manifested by the actions of the first PCs: "The first action of the PC concerns the camp environment itself. The camp's main streets are asphalted to prevent mudslides which happened during the winter's rains, and wells are dug so everyone can enjoy running water" (Gorokhoff 1984). The main effects of these decisions are to create a public space in the camps in which the movements of national liberation could instil their own discourses and frames of narration of the refugee situation: "identities became caught up with resistance activities. (...) Militants were 'real' (haqqiqiyyun) Palestinians, as were those in the camps whose daily lives were perceives as a struggle in and of themselves" (Peteet 2005:146). As Peteet explains, by investing in the camps, the PLO activists managed to legitimise their presence as true members of the camps' communities.

The shock of the Civil Wars (1982 - 1991)

The role of the Palestinian factions' increasing power in the beginning of the Civil War is debatable, but at least interacted with the Lebanese political system enough – contributing to the "split" of the Lebanese actors – to be a determining element in the conflict's unfolding (Traboulsi 2007:155). From a position of strength, during the Civil War the Palestinian's place was weakened by a series of events, starting with the Israeli invasion of 1982, the departure of the defeated PLO from the country, and the massacre in the camp of Shatila and the neighbouring area of Sabra following Bashir Gemayel's assassination. Doraï explains how, under the subsequent presidency of his brother Amine Gemayel, a policy aiming at forcing the Palestinians back into the camps was undertaken, relying on house destructions (2006:150). The unilateral cancellation of the Cairo Agreement pursued this trend. For some of the party

members I met in the camps, this period was a moment of change, repression, and the beginning of clandestine activities in an anti-Palestinian context:

What happened for you in 82?

[He laughs] A great disruption of Palestinian life and society. It's over, all the institutions passed on the outside, the Palestinians here in Lebanon found themselves naked, without any capacity, without any power, attacked by the anti-Palestinian forces of the Lebanese Forces, in cooperation with the Israelis who were in Beirut. Clandestine struggle begun here in Beirut to end this mixt colonisation. (...) In that time I left Shatila. Because I worked with the PLO centre of documentation that was in Hamra, it got blown up by the Lebanese Forces the 5th February 1993. There were many dead and wounded, and people put in jail also. (...) It became about making the contact between the families in a catastrophic situation with the clandestine organisations which could offer money for the martyrs. It's the job that all the cadres that entered clandestinity worked for. (...) For a known guy, like me, I was almost paralysed in a corner, because I was known by the press at that period. (Redwan, Mar Elias, April 2015)

The second half of the 1980s was marked by the war of the camps, “the bloodiest confrontations of the war” (Traboulsi 2007:233), including a regular and almost systematic destruction of the camps’ urban spaces, fuelled by the desire to prevent the return of the Palestinians as a considerable force. The chronicle of the sieges in Shatila by Sayigh illustrates how the third siege in particular aimed at destroying the camp (1994:291–92). The same explanation came from a former PC leader of Shatila in an informal discussion, explaining that “in the whole camp, only three building were still standing at the end” (FD, April 2015). The imposition of violence on the camps also favoured the “re-Palestinisation” of those spaces, by inciting non-Palestinians to leave them (Peteet 2005: 168).

The Ta'if period, between social inclusion and political marginalisation

The post-Civil War period was in the first place influenced considerably by the central importance of the Syrian occupier in Lebanon until its departure in 2005. Meier employs the concept of “Ta’if configuration”, named after the Peace Agreement signed at Ta’if in 1989: “the new interdependencies traversing it are the fruit of [the Ta’if Agreement] and deserve to be analysed while bearing in mind, similarly to a spatial repartition of the actors, their proximity or distance vis-à-vis a centre, monopolised by the Syrian actor, which defines and institutionalises the legitimate (political, institutional) terms in the relations between groups having to evolve on the Lebanese territory in the future” (2008:174). This presence had a notable influence on the camps, which were submitted during this period to a policy of pacification consisting in forcing a humanitarian discourse on the camps while preventing the emergence of conflict or armed struggle as much as possible. The Syrian authorities encouraged the creation of separate PCs regrouping the parties supporting it, under the label of the still-existing “Coalition” (*at-taḥāluf*)¹⁴. In parallel the PLO progressively abandoned the priority given to the refugees to focus on the creation of the Palestinian Authority (Corm 2010:722).

In Lebanon, *tawṭīn* became in the 1990s the main category with which the state conceived the question of the Palestinian refugees. While, in previous periods, it referred to an actual doctrine enounced notably by UNRWA, post-war it begins covering any improvement in the situation of the refugees in the country. *Tawṭīn* became the justification of a renewed security-oriented control of the camps, and of attempts to maintain the Palestinian population outside of Lebanese society, and to prevent as much as possible the socio-economic improvement or even the very rebuilding, of the refugee camps: “The assumption, in popular thought and within the scholarly community, was that the more miserable the camp, the less people would want to settle in the host countries and would ultimately return home” (Hanafi 2008). This

¹⁴ The division of the Palestinian political parties present in the camps between the PLO (mostly including Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)), and the Coalition (mostly including Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the PFLP-General Command, and Fateh Al-Intifada) is not exhaustive. It eludes for example groups politicising the notion of *ḡihād* (Rougier 2007). Nonetheless, the presence of such groups was moderated in the Beirut camps.

consensus was built, explains Fida Nasrallah, as one of the few in a still divided political system: “Stripped of their ability to negotiate over the future of their own country, and having lost much if not most of their freedom for political manoeuvre, the future of the Palestinians in Lebanon is one issue on which the Lebanese are allowed to express themselves freely” (1997).

This remained the case after the departure of the Syrian occupier in 2005, as manifested in 2007 with the destruction of the Nahr al-Barid. The conflict against the armed group Fatah al-Islam was the occasion to reassert the Lebanese unity around a common threat, as Amanda Dias explains: “[V]ictory was the rebirth of a phoenix from the ashes of inter-Lebanese and regional conflicts, bringing hope of an eventually unified nation. (...) Triumph over this group meant triumph over the exogenous elements perceived as strongly noxious for Lebanon” (2013:373–74). For the Palestinian refugees, the destruction of Nahr al-Barid also meant a reaffirmation of their marginality in Lebanese society. The conception of the agenda to rebuild the camps of Nahr al-Barid in Tripoli illustrated the re-emergence of containment (Hassan and Hanafi 2010). But this imposition also appeared as an act of attack on Palestinian memories themselves. Ramadan explains how the destruction of the camp was experienced as a “new Catastrophe”: “What was lost was a part of Palestinian society itself—a “second homeland” or a “temporary homeland” as it was often described to me. Displaced from the camp and barred from returning to its ruins, Nahr al-Barid’s residents relived a story of war, exile, erasure, and hopes of return that harked back to 1948, the year on which contemporary Palestinian history turns” (Ramadan 2010).

The camps are therefore the object of discourses of danger. Danger, on the one hand, to see the camps remain and resettlement become a reality; danger, equally, of the armed movements present (or imagined) in the camps and associated with a threat of terrorism; danger, finally, of spaces which escape the rule of the state without having that rule replaced by that of a trusted actor. The term *tawfīn*, although equally rejected by the refugees, was recurrently denounced as used against them:

After my discussion with Hafez, I am invited to a quick visit of the camp. (...) We arrive at a local chess association where he suggests we enter to visit the manager. We are received in an almost-empty locale where a couple of children are playing chess. Introductions are made. We sit down with Hafez and the manager to discuss and I explain the reason why I am here. (...) The manager gets angry: 'Let me tell you a thing. If I have a child, and I buy a house here, and I die. You think my child will be able to inherit anything? No, they will take it from him and say it's because he is Palestinian. They will not even let a child have his father's house. Because of *tawfīn*. What sort of *tawfīn* is it? We don't ask Lebanese passports, I don't want it, this is not *tawfīn*! I will tell you what *tawfīn* means: it means life is forbidden [*mamnū' al hayat*]. (FD, November 2014)

[In the 1990s] I started writing for Lebanese newspapers about the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. But it was on a different scale than before. It was to discuss the Lebanese laws on the rights of Palestinians here. The first article was on the right of Palestinians to work in Lebanon and it was with *Al-Safir*, I published it in 93. And it was the first article after the passage of the Palestinians to the outside [in 1982], and An-Nahar wrote (...) the Palestinians have returned. For an article about the right to work. (Redwan, Mar Elias, April 2015)

Despite this political ambience, in the post-war configuration, the camps are as we will see very similar to the other urban margins in Lebanon, approaching informal neighbourhoods and slums.

B. The Beirut camps in the post-Ta'if period, between marginality and integration

The current observation of the camps' morphology highlights elements of difference and resemblance, which question the inscription of the camps as exceptional spaces. When focusing strictly on the legal aspect, the camps are clearly a space of exception. On the city's cadastre, while the camps' surrounding areas have been the subject of partitioning, the areas on which the camps are built can be identified by the fact that the built environment does not match the cadastral division. Having been lent to UNRWA, the camps are still legally a single plot (Fig 4, 5 and 6). The legal map of the city illustrates the existence of the "pockets" of marginality that the camps still are. This depiction is nonetheless insufficient, as legal marginalisation does not lead entirely to social marginality.

Despite a discourse considering them as margins both of the society and the cities, at another, meso or micro-social scale, the distinction tends to become less neat and to disappear in a variety of dimensions. In terms of urban morphology, the camps are not working separately from the rest of the city: the camps are attached to their surroundings through the various networks of energy, such as the water, electricity, and waste disposal systems. The economic activity present in the camps is also turned towards the rest of the city: "[A] sign of the relative integration of the camp into the city is the development of some commercial activities in Mar Elias since the end of the war at the beginning of the 1990's. (...) The majority of their customers are not living in the camp – except for the groceries and fruit and vegetable shops – but come from the [surrounding] neighbourhood because the prices are lower" (Doraï 2007). Similarly, a whole portion of the Shatila camp situated at its border has developed as a succession of small factories and various forms of craftsmanship. As areas, the camps are not closed, if only for the economic possibilities arising for the rest of Beirut's inhabitants, generally from the surrounding areas, as customers.

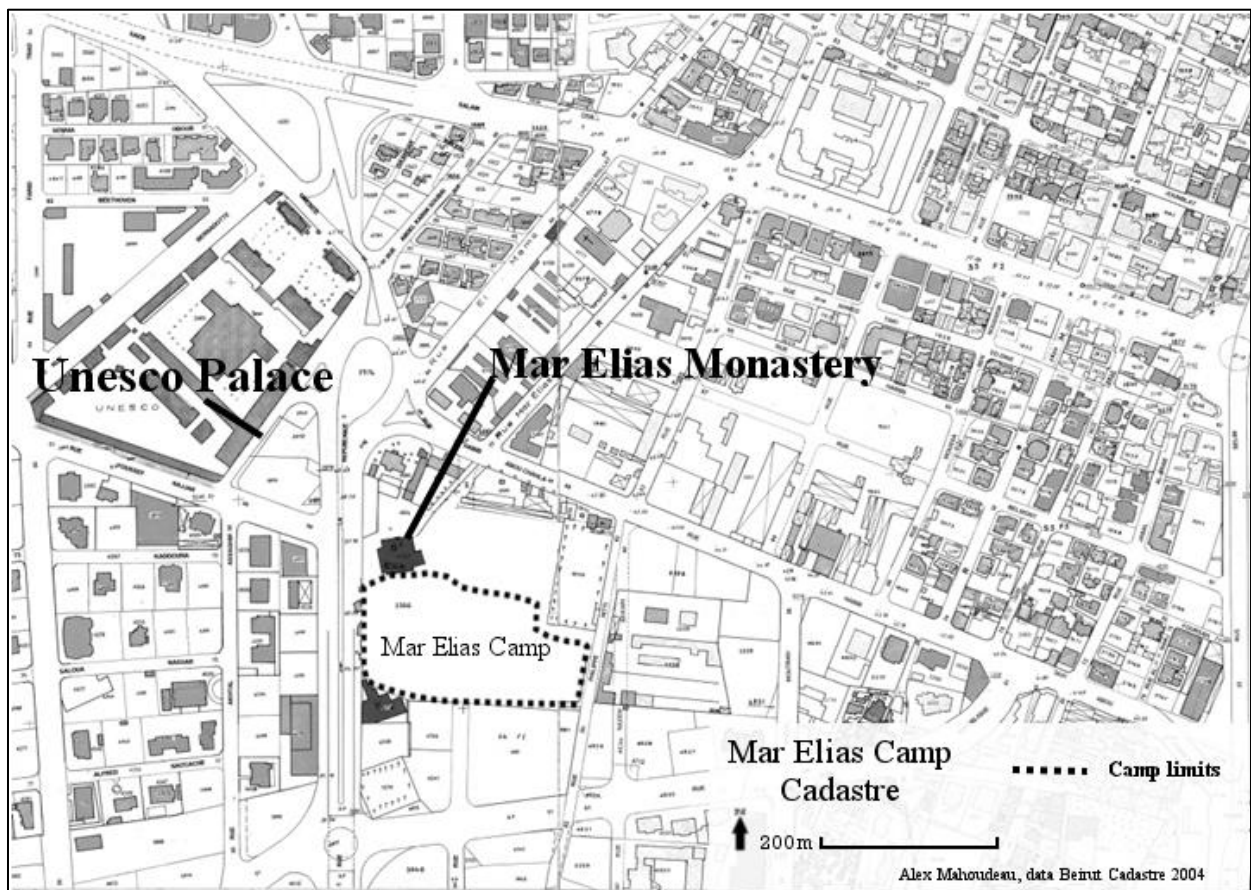


Figure 4: Mar Elias Camp (Sfeir 2004)

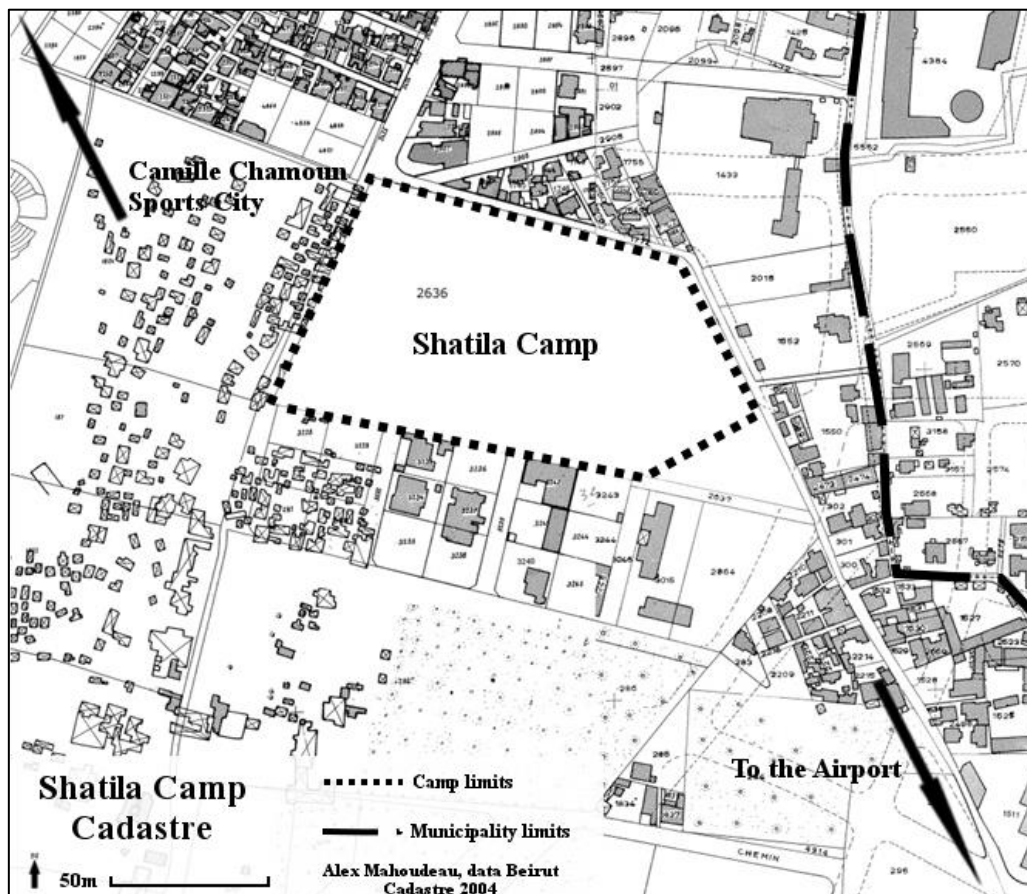


Figure 5: Shatila Camp (Sfeir 2004)

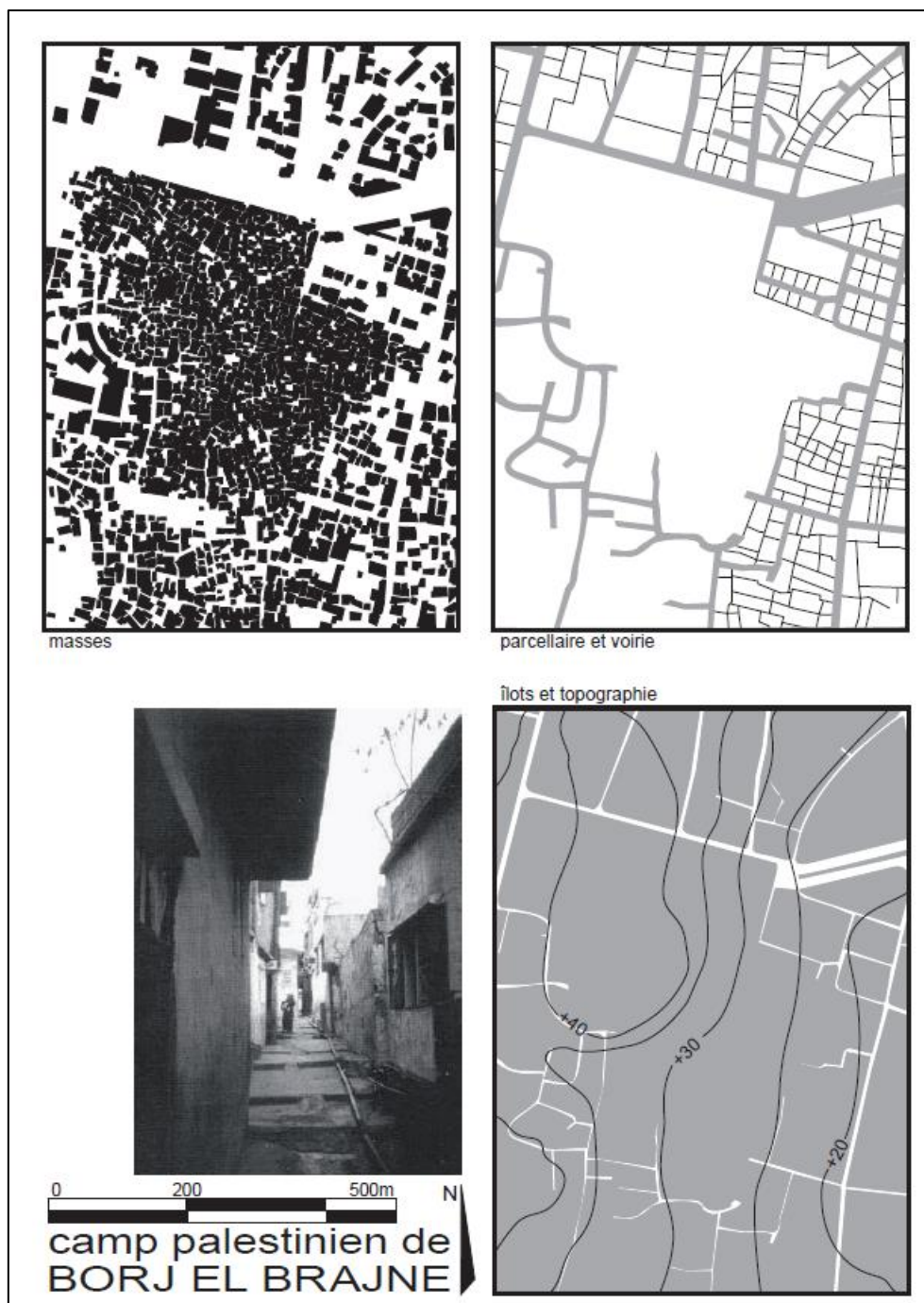


Figure 6: Burj al-Barajneh Palestinian Camp (Cottin n.d.)

Porous borders

At the street level, the transition between the surrounding areas and the camps is not a rupture. The urban development of the camps appears through the density and narrowness of public, which mirrors the shape of the urban outside of them. The transition appears through symbolic, rather than urban borders despite the existence of army checkpoints, restraining the importation of certain goods, the camps' dwellers are not locked into their spaces, split up from the Lebanese society surrounding them.

On the contrary, the camps' dwellers are in fact considerably more mobile than the fixed image of the camp implies (Puig 2012). For what concerns the everyday practice of the urban, the camps function as a "neighbourhood", a locus of social and spatial interaction which defines a specific space as "in-between" the private sphere of the habitation unit and the public and mostly anonymous sphere of the city (De Certeau et al. 2006).

The observation of one of the "gates" of Shatila allows a very clear illustration of this situation: while there are five entries to Shatila camp, the most used "gates" are located at the intersection of the Sabra market and in front of the Hariri Clinic, next to Ard Jalloul. The first one leads directly into Sabra Market, the main distinction between the camp and the city being a metallic archway bearing nationalist slogans and symbols. This gate, while clearly identified and used as a landmark when explaining directions, is crossed daily and easily, and hardly distinguished from other intersections in the area. It can be compared on that account to the main entrance of Burj al-Barajneh camp, located in front of Tariq al-Matar: despite the presence of a formal Army checkpoint at the entrance, and of the installations for a Palestinian checkpoint further on in the camp's entrance street – less regularly manned – the passage is generally fluid and open, and even obvious foreigners such as myself are rarely, if ever, stopped at either of these checkpoints.

The second gate, located in front of the Hariri Clinic, like several other entrances of the camp, has been turned into a narrow passage between and under other buildings after the densification of the built environment around what apparently used to be a wider entrance, marking the passage from "city" to "camp" more clearly. This is also the case of several of the entrances to Burj al-Barajneh camp. Would it not be for these symbolic or landscape marks, the physical entrance to the camps would appear as average urban experiences in the southern

part of Beirut. In comparison, the feeling of “contrast” is clear in the case of the Mar Elias camp, because of the nature of its surroundings, unconcerned by the original informal development of the popular neighbourhoods of Beirut.

A “normal” informal development in the agglomeration of Beirut

The material aspect of the camps is similar across them but variation can be found. In the surrounding areas of Burj al-Barajneh and Shatila, the urban density, informality of the built environment, and partial destructions are not exceptional. The density of the built environment, its precariousness, the traces of conflicts, and shallow efforts of reconstruction are shared across the urban margins of the city, partly because of its specific model of urban development. In the South, and more specifically the South-West of Beirut, development was drawn by an entanglement of formal and informal actors, leading to the constitution of a piecemeal urban morphology which includes both logics (Clerc-Huybrechts 2009).

The observation of aerial photographs of the camps and their surroundings (Fig 7, 8, and 9) shows this continuity. This is especially the case for the two southern camps inscribed in the same area as former informal neighbourhoods, and does in fact hint at a certain urban homogeneity with their surrounding areas, which is completely absent in the case of the third camp, situated in the “legal and planned city” (Clerc-Huybrechts 2009). The continuity with the surrounding “grey areas” reinforced this lack of clear division between camps and cities: “if one is in the streets of a Palestinian camp, in the old city of Saida or in the nodal neighbourhood of al-Bass in Tyre, the habitations have a similar exiguity, confinement, lack of light and overcrowding” (Meier 2008:45). On several occasions, discussions about the limits of the camp have shown the lack of clarity of this distinction for the refugees, occasionally leading to vivid debates between several refugees to determine whether one street was or not a part of the camp. In both cases, except for the occasional checkpoints, the border between what is and what is not part of the camp is extremely unclear.

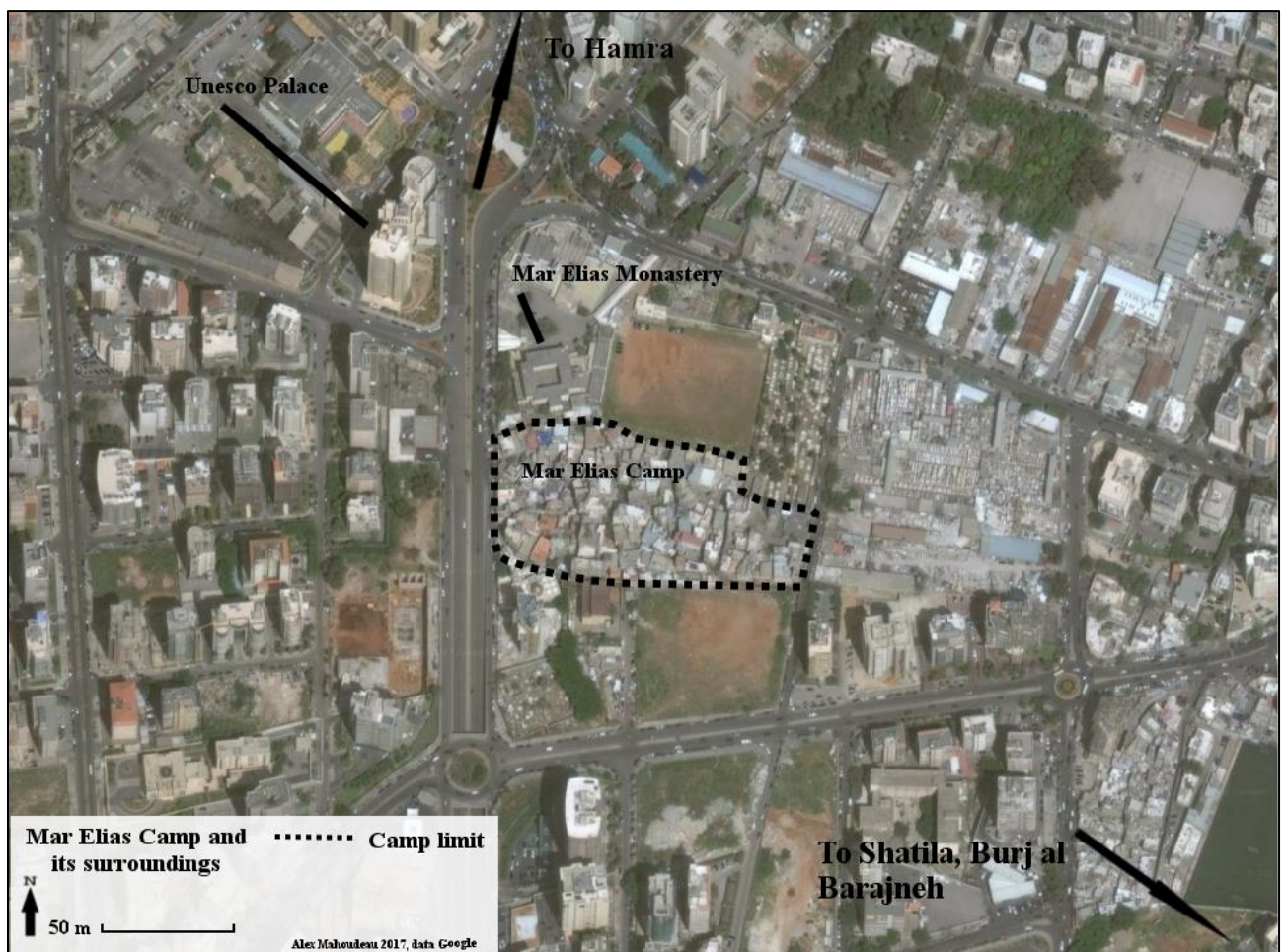


Figure 7: Mar Elias Camp and its surroundings

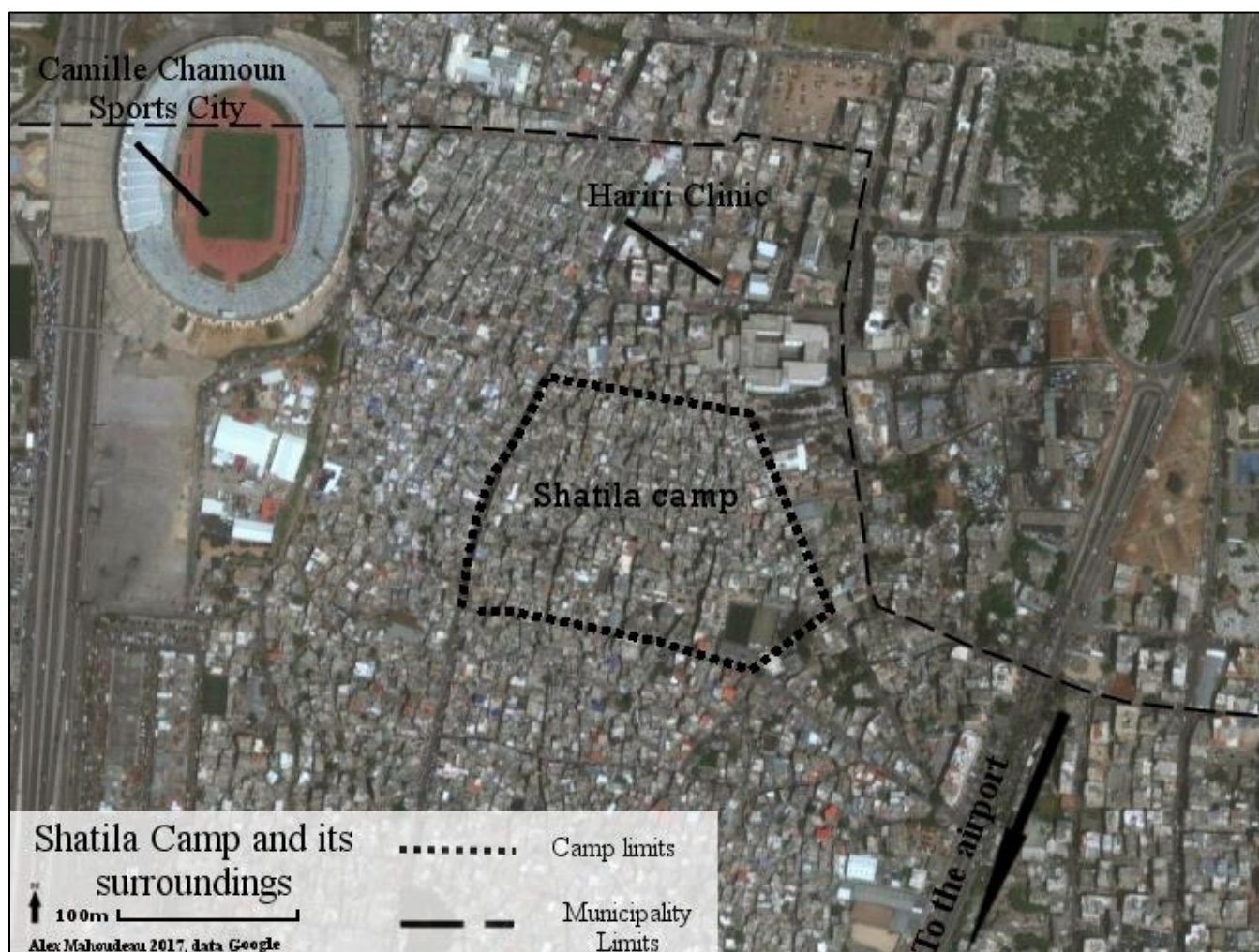


Figure 8: Shatila Camp and its surroundings

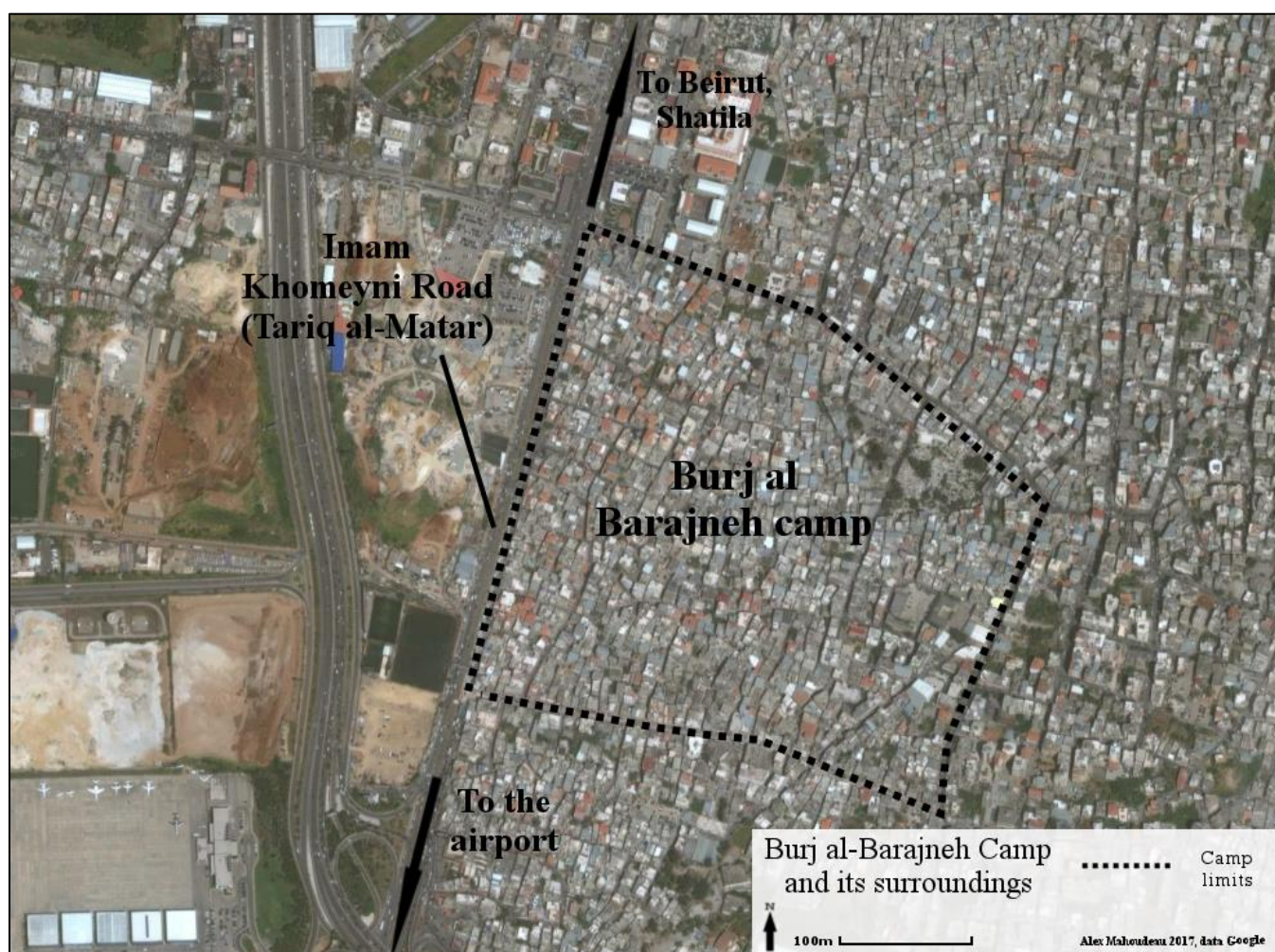


Figure 9: Burj al-Barajneh Camp and its surroundings

From the UNRWA figures presented in introduction (UNRWA 2017b), we know that approximately half the refugees in Lebanon do not live in camps. The opposite is true, as an important share of the camps' population is not made of Palestinian-Lebanese dwellers. The proportion of Palestinians in the camps has been considerably reduced due to the emigration of a part of the refugee population, and installation of non-Palestinian populations, creating economic opportunity for the Palestinian-Lebanese renting housing units (Doraï 2011). This phenomenon has increased with the Syrian conflict. If the absence of any clear statistics makes an accurate estimation of the Syrian and Palestinian-Syrian presence in the camps impossible, the approximate estimations given in the field evoke a multiplication of the camps' population by 1.5 to 2 with these two groups alone in the last six years.

This situation of contrast and similarities exemplifies the current situation of the camps, as areas: both affirming a complete integration into the city and reasoning in terms of spaces of exception is inadequate. While the legal marginalisation of these spaces and those living in them remains a reality, we must consider the camps in relation to the city, and their inclusion in its specific urban system. The camps' status is much less clear in practice than in law. This, as I will discuss now, is also the case when we focus on the camps' landscape, practice, and perceptions of the camps' spaces.

C. Locating landscape and sense of place in the camps, urban practice, production, and representations

The importance of memory has been highlighted recurrently in the study of the Palestinian camps. This memory has partly resided in symbolic investments in space: "The camp is lived by the Palestinians as a temporary place of waiting where Palestine remains alive, to better prepare the return. The refugee camp becomes the spatial support of the Palestinian memory" (Doraï 2006). The inscription of identities in landscapes has been discussed by James Duncan who defines landscape as the result of political and identity discourses put in relation with a certain arrangement of the spatial world: "A landscape (...) is a culturally produced model of how the environment should look. (...) Environments become transformed into landscapes as people transform them physically or merely reinterpret them in such a way as to bring the environment in line with a particular landscape model" (Duncan 1989).

Landscape should not be reduced to its most explicit elements, especially the presence of murals, graffiti, slogans, or placards. As defined by Don Mitchell, landscape appears as a global arrangement of space in feelings: clean/dirty, safe/dangerous, public/private, etc. emerging from historical institutionalisation of these feelings, making them seem natural, "a 'work'—a work of art, and worked land. But, as Raymond Williams, like Cosgrove, was at pains to point out, one of the purposes of landscape is to make a scene appear unworked, to make it appear fully natural. So landscape is both a work and an erasure of work" (2003:6). As every place, the camps are marked by distinctive landscapes, which epitomise the representations of their users and constitute as many saliences for them to make sense of the space they are interacting with.

A nationalist and memorial landscape

The camps' landscape appeared firstly through Palestinian-ness. The city/camps divide remained clear in the built environment because of the camp's symbolic landscape described by Adam Ramadan (2009a). Palestinian memory was re-enacted in the Beirut camps materially: the entrances were charged with symbols of Palestine, Palestinian struggles, and Palestinian nationalism, as were the walls, street-corners, and some specific places in the camps such as monuments and memorials. The nationalist aesthetic repertoire these elements relied upon in the camps identified them: flags of Palestine and the parties, logos, slogans, maps of Palestine, Al-Aqsa, the word "Palestine", Handhala, figures of politicians and martyrs, etc. As Ramadan puts it, "The slogans recall and refer to wider discourses, while the images function as signs, signifiers emptied of their original meanings and linked to new signifiers defined by the context of Palestinian people in a refugee camp" (2009a). Inscribed in space, the symbols are a part of the physical experience of the camps, constant reminders of their meaning (Fig 10 and 11).



Figure 10: Representations of Palestine: Al Aqsa



Figure 11: Representations of Palestine: Yasir Arafat

The apparent consensual dimension of this landscape must at first be put into perspective and its conflictive aspect be accounted for beyond the opposition between it and the Lebanese state discourse of the camps as “islands of insecurity” (Suleiman 1999). Khalili has shown the struggles behind nationalist discourses and how “the narrative content of mnemonic practices are constrained not only by ‘available pasts’ but also by available political discourses and by local institutions” (2007c). Drawing on this, Ramadan has highlighted how the placards and slogans were as many means of continuing competition between parties. Mar Elias’ main gate, for example, presents a competition of symbols from Fateh, the DFLP, the PFLP, the PLO, Hamas, and others, each building on the previous to assert the group’s claim over the camp: “the slogans and symbols are not just a language but also a practice: they are instructions, actions that ask people to pledge their allegiance to an ideology of Palestinian nationalism, to act on behalf of that ideology and those who represent it” (2009a). The action, for Hamas, to add discourses framing the Palestinian struggle as “Jihad” next to Yasir Arafat’s portrait is not accidental in the context of opposition between Fateh and Hamas, and more broadly between the Coalition and the PLO. As I expand in Chapter 4, the activity of inscribing Palestinian nationalisms in the camps’ landscape is foremost connected to the action of parties who defend different narratives, but also different strategies in various conflicts (Fig 12).



Figure 12: Conflicting narratives in Shatila¹⁵.

The other landscapes: mundanity in the walls

Beyond the actions of political factions, looking at the landscape in a broad understanding of the term leads to taking into account other social dimensions of life in them. In parallel to the political symbols, the landscape is marked by other actors and activities, the camps are spaces of a daily life equally as marked by exile. The camps are subjected to a “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (Bayat 1997b), and their landscapes influenced accordingly. The first type of alternative urban discourse is economic: placards promoting English lessons, water provision, or other services, information about upcoming events,

¹⁵ The partisan posters (from Fateh) displaying Yasir Arafat and Marwan Barghout, two figures of the party, cover others, from a NGO, which have been partly stripped from the wall. Beyond memory and identity, the nationalist landscape appears as a dimension of conflict and disagreement.

various shops', cafés', and restaurants' signs, graffiti informing potential customers of the presence of these shops, but also the presence of factories, workshops, shops, etc. On the walls on Fig 13, the political placards have both been completely or partly removed, and an advertisement for a street food restaurant cohabits with a graffiti promoting a gas-delivery business, electricity provision, and others.

A second urban discourse present in the camps emerges from the action of NGOs and international organisations, who develop projects in the camps and represent those in public space (Fig 14). A final discourse, generally ignored, concerns a more intimate experience of the camps: graffiti made by groups of friends, for example, are frequent and contribute to mark their landscape as much as other discourses. Beside the built environment, people and activities give a certain aspect to parts of the camps, marked by the presence of children, young men, elderly people, but also animals and plants, etc.



Figure 13: Alternative landscapes: businesses



Figure 14: Alternative landscapes: International organisations

Reception and production: living the landscape

Landscape exists insofar as it is mediated by perception (Mitchell 2003). The representations people manifest in space are important. The existing material space can be differentially perceived depending on a number of factors, including age, belonging to a party, type of political socialisation, current action's focus, and so forth. Two anecdotes can illustrate this point:

I am invited to meet with Redwan again in Mar Elias, after we met in December. He promised to provide me with a certain report on the governance of the camps, which he had to duplicate. I enter the camp but quickly get lost in the streets and do not manage to find his office. After a phone call, we meet back at the camp's entry, and he takes me to the proper place. As we reach a crossing on which a large graffiti stating "Fateh" was painted, my host comments with a

giggle “Ah! This is where we turn left!”, making reference to his own leftist sympathies, and quickly adds “No, it’s a joke of course, it’s not like that anymore”. I ask him if it was like that before, and he answers “Not really, at least not here. But you know how the parties always want to show who they are and that they are here”. (FD, January 2015)

I asked Marwan to make me visit Shatila, insisting that he took me on the places he usually goes to, rather than just around the camp in general. We meet at his office after work. We mostly stay in Najdeh’s street, and around. He does not take me to the small alleys. Marwan does not know Shatila very well, he explains, because he moved here for his work at Najdeh a few months ago. He moved in at an apartment he found thanks to his cousin, where he lives with his siblings. We stop a few times to greet his friends, and he promises them that we will meet at a café in Tariq el-Jdideh after we are finished here. Marwan is worried for one of his friends, whom he constantly sees loitering in the camp: “That man we saw, I feel sad for him. He is young and he does not have a job, so he waits all day, does nothing. We always go to him and say come with us to the café, or to play basketball, but he never comes. He has no hope, you see”. We arrive at a crossing next to the DFLP’s office, where a few young men are in the street, under a large DFLP banner. I point to it and comment that there is a lot of these in the camp. Marwan replies saying that yes, a lot of men are without a job, especially the younger. I answer that I was talking about the banner, and also the graffiti, that we see a lot of signs for the parties in the camp: “Oh yes”, he replies, “but you know, I don’t care about it, I mean I don’t even see it anymore. That’s political, that’s for the parties. Me I don’t care about that”. (FD, March 2015)

These two cases show how the materiality of space, from the presence of graffiti and placards, the orientation of streets, the presence of people, to the position in the city, and so on, plays a role in the way the camps-dwellers, as practitioners of space, can make sense of and relate to it. The presence of the graffiti, for example, added to the position and orientation of the street (since the fact that it is effectively demanded to turn left in order to join the office), is the occasion to remind Redwan of the presence of a diverse and conflictive political history in the camps. It is also the occasion to name a political change, both for himself, who moved from being an partisan to acting under the frame of NGOs, and for the Palestinian camps as a whole, in which the conflict between factions increasingly appeared as a struggle for the appropriation of resources. Marwan’s expressions revealed a different landscape, marked by the presence of places making sense to him, such as his office and home, added to the

presence of jobless younger men he related to and worries about, to the point that he proclaims he “does not see” the political parties’ symbols.

The previous examples show us the ways in which the camp’s landscape is at the same time a given to be made sense of and something to struggle over. For Redwan or Marwan, the camp’s landscape is not the same, although the material space is. Both the practice and understanding of space were in these cases influenced not only by the aims of the informants, but also by the specific social resources available to them to make sense of this space in specific situations. As Agier explains regarding the camps, “The very expression of the Palestinian geography of exile, they are the places of expression and recomposition of collective and individual identifications, which are being maintained since sixty years” (2011b:19).

In the camp and at home, experiences of the camps’ space

The experiences of the camps’ spaces, and the registers used to describe them, were associated with discourses of identity, attached to individual experiences. These spatial representations remained collective, insofar as they all fitted a certain narrative repertoire of representations. The camps were presented as containers of a Palestinian identity because of the length of the Palestinian presence in them. The important presence of Palestinian refugees in these areas and the impression of always meeting Palestinians in the camps, and having a concentration of Palestinian families in these areas were recurrently quoted in the interviews:

Could you tell me what is specifically Palestinian about the camps?

Look the camps it’s related to the refugees. And it keeps the link with the right of return. When there is a camp, there is refugees, there is right of return. So this is evidence, concrete evidence, that I’m outside my homeland which is Palestine. So to us we look at the camps as identity, and as an evidence to make the international community, especially UN bodies, witnessing the case of the refugees. (...)

But what are people doing, are people doing anything specific to remind that they are Palestinians and to stay connected?

Of course, I mean there is different activities to keep the people related to Palestine, to keep the people know what is happening in Palestine, to keep the people committed to the Palestinian cause, and to keep the people knows their rights and duties. So of course, different ways, if it is from the political factions they play a big role in this. If it is NGOs, if it is clubs, I mean, all the stakeholders within the Palestinian community plays the role to keeping the Palestinians connected to their nation. (Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014)

What gives the impression of a Palestinian identity in the camp?

Alright the camp, after the exile in 1948, UNRWA said these are the camps. It was the camps Rashidiyeh, Al-Buss, Burj al-Shamali, Ain el-Hilweh, Burj al-Barajneh, Shatila, Dbayeh, Baalbak... hem, Wival, Barid, and Baddawi, all those are camps, and all those are Palestinians. There is there another nationality, and the land is protected for a hundred years. Hundred years.

What about the everyday life?

In the everyday life, in the camp there was in this camp only Palestinians, there was no other nationality. And the Palestinians went to work for Lebanese, they went. It was some small jobs, difficult jobs. Since then it has changed in the camps, if that's what your ask, if that's what you mean with your question. Because if you take for instance the camp of Burj al-Barajneh, there are now many different nationalities, recently the exiles from Syria, from the Syrian war, so a lot of people came, Palestinian-Syrians. From Yarmouk and from the other camps in Syria. They live in the camp. (Samira, Burj al-Barajneh, February 2015)

The presence of Syrians and Palestinian-Syrians is not a consensual element in the camps and caused visible tension between the “new” and the “old” refugees¹⁶ (Abou Zaki 2015), balanced by an ethic of welcoming and hosting towards the Syrian and Palestinian-Syrian groups, justified by the common experience of exile:

¹⁶ Worriness about seeing too many “foreigners” in the camps was evoked in the interviews of Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Badia, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Munira, Shatila, March 2015; Um Muhammad, Shatila, February 2015).

[T]he camp was built from UNRWA for the Palestinian refugees. After some years it opened to Syrians, any poor people can come.

But it stays Palestinian?

Yeah, yeah.

So the non-Palestinians coming to the camps did not change the identity?

Yes. Not the identity, but the culture. Some culture, some eh... if you see the camp you can see, some places that for the Syrian that makes a mix between Palestinian and Syrian but in a political you can say that the camps are still Palestinians. (Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

Since you have lived a while inside and outside of the camp could you tell me what's the difference?

Here? The difference between the camp and the neighbourhood? Well the first thing is the world is different, between the societies in the camp and outside. We don't know the people there. Here the people, we know them. Most of them. We share the same tradition, the same customs. For what concerns the living, well maybe outside it's better, I don't know, but here I feel good. (Nada, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)¹⁷

The camps are both places of poverty and exclusion, and of identity, associated with the Palestinians in particular. This marked a boundary between the Palestinian-Syrians and other groups such as the South-East Asian expatriates. Welcoming the refugees from Syria was framed by camp dwellers as a logical consequence of the camps' identity, and as a moral duty for their "traditional" dwellers. The specific status of the camps as places of exile and the right to return were mobilised in interviews:

¹⁷ This ethic of welcoming was evoked for example by Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014; Khalila, Beirut, February 2015; UNRWA, Beirut, March 2015; Taha, Mar Elias, March 2015; Jamil, HEKS, Beirut, February 2016; Amira, Shatila, April 2016; Fadi, Shatila, April 2016)

Yes we want to return to Palestine, we want to leave Lebanon, especially because our experience here is not so good to be committed for it, but that doesn't mean at all that if I'm saying I want to go back that you will not allow me to live properly, to live in dignity, to have the right to work or to own a property. (Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014)

Identity was also put forward by Palestinians living outside the camps. Visiting the camps was described as a necessity, both in political and in personal terms. In these interviewees' discourses, being in the camps took a different meaning, almost entirely attached to a political action. The contact with the Palestinian camps was for these activists perceived as a necessity to relate to a concrete experience of Palestinian-ness. Most of these interviewees had grown up outside of the camps and discovered them during their years as students or young adults. Getting involved was presented as an obvious choice for children raised in Palestinian families and outside the camps. Frequenting the camps, working, and making friends in them was described as a way to be a part of the Palestinian community.

When you say we relate to the camp, what do you mean?

As a Palestinian girl, at that time [She laughs] I am concerned, everywhere I go in the camp, and everything that happens in the camp, I am involved in because, and not only in this one camp, but in all the camps! I have a role towards them because I am one of them, of course, and I have one cause that is the Palestinian cause. Yes, this is our cause everyone has a role to work with their capacity to this cause. And in that age, I mean the best was volunteer, and to be concerned with the organisations like this. It's not only me. Not only me, I mean most of my friends were... (Badia, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

The camps are a way for me to touch Palestine, if I go demonstrate, and many youth thinks like that too, if I go demonstrate I will change nothing, the youth think that you alone cannot change the world. But if I do something in the camps, it is also a way to do something for Palestine. And it is also I think the influence of Mansour, who has a lot of that idea as well, and the workshops also helped a lot on that, because we talked about it.

You didn't grow up in the camps?

No, I am half-Lebanese, my mother is Lebanese, and I have the Palestinian identity. But I never went to the camps as a child.

When is the first time you went?

Very early. I was twelve.

What did you think?

Me what I think I don't know. But there is my sister, she is... she doesn't care about Palestinians. She says she likes Palestine, like she likes Syria, or Iraq, she likes every Arab country but for her she is Lebanese. So I took her to the camps once, and it was, she was shocked. She couldn't believe people lived like that. (Umar, Beirut, February 2015)

So what is the specificity of the camp? As a researcher and also since you live outside, where is the Palestinian identity in it?

It is an exceptional space, it's outside everything. In Lebanon, camps are like Jewish ghettos in Germany. The Lebanese know where the camps are, but they don't want to go in them, they are afraid, they think people in the camps are all thieves and murderers. And those who go, they are like Star Trek, you know, the ship Enterprise: they go where nobody goes! [She laughs] It just came to me, but it is the truth. But for Palestinians, it is very different. I did not grow up in the camps, but I had the chance to go there and to go there often, it makes me always... closer to Palestine. Going to the camp is always like going a little bit to Palestine really. It is nurturing. (Khalila, Beirut, February 2015)

A common discourse, along with the identity-oriented description of the camps, focused on the importance of being to an extent protected from the control of the Lebanese state and society. In opposition to a Lebanese narrative considering them as spaces of lawlessness, the camps were conceived as safe from brutal interaction, especially with the police, but also with other institutions. For Marwan the camps were also a space of safety because of the existing solidarity he was excluded from in the Lebanese society. Formerly employed in the city, he evoked this realisation after an accident: "My boss told me he couldn't help me because I was Palestinian and that I should go home". For Marwan, such an episode would not have happened in the camp, where "Every time there is an accident, people help, they call at the mosque to gather money for the doctor".

The representations of space appeared as simultaneously restricted and plural: the camps appear at the same time as spaces of marginalisation and suffering, and as safe spaces of intimacy and home. Jalal al-Husseini (2011) showed how a variety of other discourses from the memorial one were combined to the urban meaning-making in the camps and Palestinian-ness. Palestinian-ness is neither monolithic nor purely fluid, existing through diversified registers and themes, activated and actualised depending on resources and situations. As Rosemary Sayigh puts it, “Though the idea of a common national identity still possesses a certain unifying force, it no longer mobilises for common aims or struggle. In this situation, alternative vehicles of popular nationalism become strategically important. The ‘local’ may express the ‘national’ more persistently than the political leadership” (Sayigh 2011). The current geography of the camps reveals much more, and that a variety of landscapes cohabit and sometimes conflict. If the camps are places of a popular memory, they are also the places of the expression of politicised, religious, identity, misery, and heroism discourses, of the representation of the action of NGOs and international organisations, places marked by the presence of private actors and companies, of various groups marked by different histories, and of specific forms of suffering. This production of a plural landscape is to associate with the forms of power at play in the camps. In the following part, I will discuss the ways in which the camps are governed.

II. A plural urban governance

The observation of the production of place in the camps indicates that these spaces are not subjected to a simple model. The first element to emerge, when interrogating the systems of governance in the camps, is the multiplication of influential actors who cooperate or enter into conflict on occasion, but can as well exert a certain influence without any interaction with one another. The camps' landscape thus appears as a compilation of successive "strata" which bear a trace of a history of partial actions, partial modifications, occasional conflict, and occasional cooperation between actors who can be related to one another or not.

This part will present a model to apprehend the urban governance of the camps. I will in the first section rely on works on local governance to switch from sovereignty-centred modal to one focused on systems of interactions seen "from below", as proposed by Magnusson (2011). It will allow me to demonstrate how the production of space in the camps is the effect of the relations these actors have through space. From this perspective, the camps are governed through a pluralist model, not only in terms of who acts on the production of space, but also in terms of the forms of "governmentalities"¹⁸ which determine this production. This will be the focus of the second and third sections of this part.

¹⁸ The term is chosen by Sari Hanafi (2010), carries its own range of debates on the uses of Foucault in the study of power. Although aware of these, I do not refer to them directly here.

A. Theorising a “system of actors”

The local, from field to object

For Jean-Louis Briquet and Frédéric Sawicki (1989), trying to identify a model to comprehend local urban government of specific local areas has generally led in political science to two misapprehensions. Pluralism considers the local as the privileged area of negotiation between various interests (Dahl 1961). Its main influence has been the study of the “political machines” in the United States, interrogating the specifics of local power as a way to control and gather resources (Wolfinger 1972). It developed in French political science through the question of the “local political-administrative system” described by Pierre Grémion (1976) or more recently with Cesare Mattina’s work on urban clientelism (2016). These different models describe the state as interacting with other actors for the mobilisation of support and votes, in exchange for services and resources. The local is a pretext or a context for the analysis of this state-society relation. The particularities of the local can come from the particular alliances that are forged in it (Strom 1996) or its ability to resist the centre (Corcuff and Lafaye 1989), but the local remains in broad terms only a laboratory. Another approach relied on Marxist theories, highlighting the continuity between class relations and urban politics (Harvey 1975, 2012). In this approach, “the ‘local political stage’ appears as a place where phenomena generalizable at the scale of the nation (for example the struggle of classes) refract.” (Briquet and Sawicki 1989). The local is apprehended insofar as it works as this “refraction”, which is why social movements seem to coalesce on urban issues (Castells 1983), but it takes meaning only in relation to “broader” phenomena like class struggle.

The theoretical limits of each of these models lies precisely in their approach to the local as “an observation point allowing the study of wider objects and the unveiling of the global rules of their functioning” (Briquet and Sawicki 1989). A common argument against this perspective stresses the specificity of the local scale against the scale of the nation-state.

Reconsidering power from a city perspective

An alternative proposal to the state-centred model has been formulated by Warren Magnusson. He criticises the error of considering that “There are states. States have sovereignty. (...) Thus, there is a field of the political that invites people in. To engage politically is, first and foremost, to engage in that field” (2014). This approach carries at least three implications: the local system of government is not restricted to the state; this government is not a mere subdivision of the national state; urban politics cover the entire spectrum of politics, including geopolitics and international relations (2014). Instead of searching for sovereignty, Magnusson encourages to clarify the terms in which to apprehend politics as they unfold at a certain scale, the local, as a construct.

The issue of scale has been the object of a still on-going debate in geography. The concept itself has been questioned as, in the last resort every action is necessarily local (Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005). Simultaneously, social actors experience scalar relations, both as a hierarchy of power and of space (Prytherch 2008). Scales “impose their own ‘reality’ on researchers as they do on local actors” (Briquet and Sawicki 1989), of the relationships that unfold around them. In short, the fact that scales are socially constructed does not allow us to treat them as abstractions.

Political scientist Cilja Harders proposes an alternative model relying on a “state analysis from below” (2013), focusing on the relation between local actors and the state. This relation is a permanent interaction between different actors, either individual or collective, belonging or not to the state. It relies on a broad understanding of politics, and on taking into account the scale at which the actors situate themselves. This allows the author to map these scales and the relevant actors in terms of their formal or informal character, and identifying the local state as an expanded political system of interactions.

The concept of “system of interactions” (Grojean 2008) refers to Michel Crozier and Ehrard Friedberg’s “concrete system of action” (Crozier and Friedberg 1977). Grojean describes this system as an assemblage of symbolically-charged sites in which actors are copresent (Grojean 2008), in this case, the Palestinian camps of Beirut. Each actor interacts with other actors by virtue of spatial copresence. As I develop further in Chapter 2, these interactions are not unbounded: “Depending on the contexts, the relative values of these resources have a big

chance of changing, and the political actors have interest in using them in different ways to adopt winning strategies” (Briquet and Sawicki 1989). At the local scale, a variety of registers of valuation and resources exist, which do not guarantee a domination of the “broad” over the “small”.

B. Reconstructing the system of interaction

Disorganisation as an actor’s category

The previous model aims at going beyond an Agambian model of “exception” which overlooks the concrete structure of relations in the camps (Martin 2015). The lack of a single leadership is linked to two phenomena in the post-war period: the Lebanese state containment policy, and the withdrawal of the PLO from the country: “there is an endemic crisis of governance in and between Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Rampant factionalism, clientelism, sectarian strife, oppressive Lebanese security and surveillance, and a lack of central administrative and juridical Palestinian authority continue to prevent Palestinians from establishing effective governance structures” (Hanafi and Long 2010).

This situation is associated with the multiplication of what Hanafi calls “alternative forms of governmentality”, associated with a delegitimisation of politics in general: “Interviews clearly showed the gap between [UNRWA service officer’s] perceived role and actual function. This confusion is not due to the refugees’ cognitive disorder but rather stems from the historical role played by UNRWA directors in not merely providing services but also in administering and coordinating many aspects of the refugees’ lives. (...) Many interviewees indeed used the word ‘chaos’ to describe the situation in the camps and blame UNRWA’s inaction as a major cause” (2011:31–32). Kortam adds that “Such a situation creates a climate of insecurity within the Palestinian communities in the camps, (...) they feel abandoned by their local leadership, which is unable to agree on a proper mode of governance to improve the situation” (2011). In the absence of a “mode of governance”, the role of sovereign has befallen to UNRWA, but the governance of the camps would represent a “chaotic” arrangement.

Urban governance of the camps experienced

The analysis of the camps as “chaotic” was frequently employed in interview. When asked about the camps’ governance, the interviewees would generally present both a normative order of things, followed by a description of the “chaos”:

Could you explain to me what is, I mean, the system in the camps, if people have a problem who do they go to, who is in charge of the camp?

Mostly they go to the PC, but it doesn’t do much I mean. It depends on the type of problems. There are NGOs, there are PCs, there is, how do you call it, the security committee, there are the factions, the stakeholders also, I mean it depends on the type of problem really. (Badia, Beirut, January 2015)

Who is the leader in the camp?

There isn’t, UNRWA, but there isn’t, the security committee is just a gathering of the factions, all the factions and parties. Except UNRWA of course. [It’s, to some extent, the responsible for what is going on. To some extent.] (Jamila and Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

The similarity of Badia and Jamila’s description shows how we are less confronted with a private opinion than to a shared social representation. We also see that the identification of the most acknowledged of the camps’ leaders is immediately followed by the denunciation of their inefficacy. The context of the interview is necessary to understand these answers. The designation of the “official” leaders of the camp, during interviews with a researcher, provides at the same time an acceptable answer in “a very complex space where different actors intervene” (Kortam 2011), and the occasion to identify a responsible for a criticised situation, as the interpreter’s intervention in Jamila’s interview highlights.

When inquiring about the same topic by interrogating practices and personal memories, a different narrative seems to emerge:

And what do you do, yourself, for example?

Maybe if I go to see the boss of Pursue, fill the website and they will solve things in a year. If they don’t solve things in a year, we will do something else, they will go maybe to the PC, ask for things, or I can go to UNRWA and ask I want this service... Now they have for garbage

there is one employee only, and he does it for 8 to 1. If we ask UNRWA maybe they can put another, I don't know. (...)

Tell me about the system, when people have a problem in the camp, do they go to a person, a party, a committee?

Maybe they go to a person, and they help them. But it's like corruption you know, for instance if I am Fateh and I go to ask something to the Hamas person, they will say maybe no, you are Fateh, we can't give you. Also if I am Hamas and I go to Fateh the same, they can't give you. It's also the same with UNRWA you know, the way they treat with people it's very bad, they have diminished service, if there was 100% service before, now it's only 10%. There was the story you now of kid who needs operation, and he needed something like 40 million. And UNRWA only they gave 10%. So [the PYN's organiser] he did thing to get the money and they paid for everything. That's also why he's very very known.

So who provides the service?

The PC but they do bad thing, and also the foundations, they do very good work for the people. Me I think that is important, the people can go to the foundations, they will help them. (Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015)

But, I mean, you take the example of France, or even Beirut or Geitawi¹⁹, this cleaning of the streets, if I go there, I would expect the municipality to do it...

Yes well here there is no municipality. Like Ghobeyri maybe they give us something but... I mean in Beirut they have Sukleen 24 hours per day, but here they don't come. UNRWA does a little, like two hours sometimes, but in general life...

But I mean there is the PC, all that, do you think it is normal it is done by Najdeh?

Why not, Najdeh is a NGO. It's true that we didn't have NGO in Syria. Did we have NGOs do you know Wissam? [Wissam: no, only the state] But here it is done by NGO, so why not,

¹⁹ Both of these areas had been touched in the previous year by a serious garbage crisis, giving rise to the "You Stink" movement, which had struck me by the ease with which responsibility had been attributed, and on which I return on Chapter Four.

they're doing it for the people. The PC they're too busy with their... and they don't have money also. But we met, we meet with the guy from the PC occasionally but it's us who have the money, so we are the ones doing it. (Tariq, Shatila, February 2016)

In practice the “chaotic” representation seems to fade: the interviewees clearly identify with whom, in what situation, and around which issue, they interact²⁰. Looking at the production of specific pieces of infrastructure reinforces this impression. Interrogating the history behind the emergence of a specific infrastructure reveals much more clearly the processes and actors at play.

A typical case in Shatila concerned the installation of a tower in a square in a middle of the camp, in which a reverse osmosis²¹ facility had been installed. Whenever that installation was evoked, it was attributed either to UNRWA or to the PC. This depiction disappeared when looking at the realisation of concrete projects: a few years before, the Swiss Development Council had secured funding to find a solution to the lack of access to potable water in the Beirut camps, the solution deemed most efficient being the installation of reverse osmosis plants, following studies realised on other groups using the technology (SDC, Beirut, November 2014). UNRWA and the PCs had been gathered around the project in order to develop contacts with the local community and at the same time confirm the needs, and sensitise to the specificities of the chosen technology. After organising a series of meetings with focus groups, as well as with the PCs and the leaders of the main parties, the project began for a period during which the SDC also worked with the PCs to prepare for the specifics of the use of the facilities. They worked on the necessity to pay a fee to access potable water, the choice of distribution points in several spots of the camp rather than a

²⁰ Similar descriptions were made among others by Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014; Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Nada, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Badia, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Samira, Burj al-Barajneh, February 2015; Um Muhammad, Shatila, February 2015; Taha, Mar Elias, March 2015; Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015; Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, March 2015; Layla, director of Najdeh, Beirut, April 2015; Tariq, Shatila, February 2016; Fadi, Shatila, April 2016, and all along the field in informal conversations.

²¹ Reverse osmosis is a method of water desalinisation relying on filtration.

connection of individual taps by home to the system, and the opening hours. The learning of the use of that new resource did not take place without conflicts, dwellers being especially doubtful on the necessity to pay a fee, while they considered that UNRWA, which was part of the construction process, should be in charge of providing urban services to the refugees, and of the choice to arrange the water distribution around common taps, judged as a retrograde choice. In such a specific topic, we can see one of the possible arrangement of actors, institutions, and scales, associated with their specific resources, which interact in the production of the camps' space.

As Hanafi puts it, "Instead of one sovereign, camps are ruled by a tapestry of multiple, partial sovereignties" (2011:30). Following Magnusson's advice, I propose to attempt interrogating the production of space through the concrete modalities of its realisation and, therefore, to take a pluralist perspective. In the following section, I will rely on existing mappings of political sovereignty in the camps to draw as accurate a map as possible of the system of interactions governing the camps' space.

C. Situating the actors in the camps, a multi-scalar interactionist model

Mapping politics at the local scale

To reduce as little as possible the scope of the discussion I look at urban governance as the production of space, including "the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the *social*" (Lefebvre 2000:11). The material transformation of the camps' space will matter as much in the analysis as its symbolic, social, and mental transformation, because of the interpenetration of space, landscape, and meaning we have explored earlier.. A first model has been proposed by Sari Hanafi (2011:31):

	Lebanon
Leading authority	Delegitimised PC
Second leading authority	Factions: Fatah or Hamas
Phantom Sovereignty	UNRWA
Islamic governmentalities	Hamas and conservative popular Lebanese Islam

Table 1: Excerpt: Actors of the camp governance, in Hanafi (2011: 31)

This model can be expanded to a certain extent, based on the previous discussion and integrating other actors. I define the relevant actors in the broadest possible manner, as any actor, either individual or collective, explicitly or implicitly constituted, whose actions have a direct or indirect impact on the production of the camps' space, whichever the importance of this impact, both in terms of its relevant scale and material dimension, following a plan or not, and whether this actor holds an official mandate to do so or not.

This choice demands to be justified. First, it integrates both individual and collective actors, institutions, and networks into a single category. Without supposing a strict equality between them, we have to integrate all actors, individual or collective, participating into the model. We must also take into account the multi-positionality of individuals: depending on the situation, a same person can be a member of different actors (member of an organisation or a network of individuals, and another, or a "simple inhabitant" of a camp, or an expert, etc.). The definition of who a person is at a given moment is never independent of the content of the interaction at play, as discussed by Issa regarding the question of belonging to political factions: "The official classification of friend, member, and cadre implied that the relationship between a Palestinian and a faction was a relationship between a person and a structure with different degrees of commitment. (...) Factional affiliation should not be seen as a snapshot of a person's present position in relation to a structure, rather it should be seen as a continuously unfolding story of human interactions" (2014:159). During my fieldwork, it became apparent that rather than an "actual" belonging, the strategies of presentation of the self employed by the persons were much more dependent on the situation, and varied not only according to a frontstage / backstage logic, but also according to the structuration of various front- and backstages. I follow here Goffman's (Goffman 1983, 1963) notion of situational properties,

which is pushed by Cefai's affirmation that "Public space is a dramaturgical stage, in Goffman's sense, where actors, while respecting the ritual and legal rules of the game, play typical roles, declaim typical discourses, apply typical routines, follow typical scripts, constantly invent and improvise new scenarios" (Cefai 1999). The structuration of situations is part of how a person presents herself. The choice to include every collective, even the most informal, follows the same logic. There can be discreet negotiations and interactions, partly hidden, unnamed, or simply intimate alliances and oppositions between actors, either on specific topics or durably instituted.

Similarly, I do not restrain the types of actions defining these actors to direct or planned actions, because of the type of urban development of the camps and the share taken by the effects of the dwellers' coping strategies and "the quiet encroachment of the ordinary" (Bayat 1997a, 2013). Describing incremental change via unplanned action, the concept "embodies the protracted mobilization of millions of detached and dispersed individuals and families who strive to enhance their lives in a lifelong collective effort that bears few elements of pivotal leadership, ideology, or structured organisation" (2013:15). To restrict the production of space to planned and direct actions would ignore the structuring effects of dwelling and the appropriation of space on the morphology and the symbolic meanings inscribed in the camps' spaces.

A final delimitation concerns the relevant scale for each actor, the relevant universe of interactions, actors, and places, in which one situates oneself. In that sense, scale works, as discussed earlier, as a social institution, at the same time perceived and performative. The importance of this distinction is relevant because it plays a role in the relevant events to which actors respond or anticipate they will have to answer. A simple example of that can be given with the evolution – and reduction – of UNRWA's services in the last years. These reductions were described, during the fieldwork, according to two very different narratives. Most interviewees associated it to a lack of support from the Agency, a first step before its disappearance and a forced resettlement in the host country, or to incompetence and corruption. The same issue, when tackled with UNRWA workers, appeared under a different narrative:

Talking about the reduction of services...

It's true we had to reduce the services, but look, we are present here, and suddenly we had to deal with the Syrian crisis, and the Palestinians from Syria coming in Lebanon. Not the Syrians, that is not our mandate, but it is considerably much more people. And just before that we had the crisis in Gaza, and the need for reconstruction over there, and we are still present in Jordan... And all that with less money. We cannot be everywhere and guarantee the same services as before with less money. And that is what they did not see here, because they don't see all these contexts, all they see is their help is being reduced, and it's bad, but if we want to maintain some help we had to cut some services. (UNRWA, Beirut, March 2015)

While the camp dwellers were making sense of the reduction of services with the cognitive resources available at the local scale, the Agency's perception is modelled after its inclusion at another one which included places like Gaza, Jordan, or Syria. Scale is as much a social as it is a geographical dimension, and it does carry a certain degree of hierarchy in each field, the "general" being considered as having primacy over the "specific". Obviously, one cannot reduce the presence of each actor to a specific scale, because of scale-jumping phenomena, which are described in Chapter 4. For the sake of clarity, I will ignore these phenomena and present the actors at the scale of their "ordinary" presence.

Once these dimensions taken into account, we can outline a potential mapping of the system of interactions governing the camps in the following table:

Table 2: The system of interactions governing the camps

	Formal state and para-state actors	Formal non-state actors	Informal actors
International	UNRWA, UN-Habitat, States (via development agencies), European Union, National Palestinian Authority	International NGOs, International social movements, Palestine Liberation Organisation, Coalition of the Palestinian Forces	Individual donors and activists, International expertise networks and researchers
National	Lebanese government agencies (Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Army, Ministry of Interior)	Electricité du Liban, Lebanese political parties	National expertise networks and researchers
Translocal		National Coordination of the PCs, Palestinian and Lebanese NGOs	Interknowledge groups, Other camps
Local external	Municipalities		“Adjacent Areas”, Local urban services entrepreneurs (water, gas, electricity, etc.)
Local internal	UNRWA Camp Service Officers, PCs, Security Committees	Palestinian and Lebanese NGOs camp offices, Camp sections of Palestinian parties, Local development companies, Social movements and consultation groups	Households, Local business-owners, Family support associations, Neighbourhood associations, Notables (religious, political, associational leaders), Persons of “good reputation” and “do-gooders”, Informal networks and social movements

The formal state sector

The “formal state actors” category includes state and parastatal actors, including the UN agencies present in the camps, UNRWA and UN-Habitat, which has held a number of programmes on the camps regarding their integration into the city, especially in their “Adjacent Areas”. UNRWA’s mandate habilitates it “to carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programmes as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission”. The “official camps” are, as areas, officially under its direct management (Sayigh 1994), under an emphyteutic lessee (Roberts 2010). UNRWA originally provided shelter, and later contributed to the camps’ hardening and urban development (Gorokhoff 1984). After the replacement of the Field Engineering and Construction Services Office by the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme in 2010, this part of the Agency’s work has been reaffirmed, the Agency being in charge of a certain number of programmes. At the local scale the Agency’s role is both more diluted and tangible, as it is perceived as the organisation in charge of the camps’ life. The local UNRWA employees, and in particular local camp services officers, represent this role the most, occasionally playing the role of local notables to an extent. They are not merely the local extension of the Agency, and have a much wider role than their official mandates, serving partly as producers, through their local inclusion, of the dwellers’ needs.

Other state-led development agencies are present, such as the Swiss Development Council, or the Italian Development Cooperation, but also international organisations such as the European Union. Their contributions take two forms: the direct realisation of punctual projects, such as the reverse osmosis plant, generally in relation with UNRWA and local groups, through various “participatory” frameworks, and funding directly a number of local actors, particularly NGOs, which engage with projects fitting in their current priorities.

At the national scale, the Lebanese state holds a different role through at least three institutions: the Army, the Ministry of Interior via the General Directorate of the General Security, were the most evoked because of their security and containment-oriented work. It involves a certain degree of policing of the camps’ entrances, generally restricted to the installation of checkpoints at some of the camps’ and surrounding areas’ entrances and punctual identity controls. It can extend to the limitation of importation of raw building

material. The precedent set by the partial destruction of Nahr al-Bared, or more recently the walling of Ain el-Hilweh, testifies of the existence of urban violence as a possible form of policing the camps from the state's perspective. Other institutions include the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, created in 2005 to serve as an instance of contact and exchange between the Palestinian factions and parties, and the government. Having been mostly focused on issues of security for a period, it moved toward other considerations, such as reporting on the Palestinian communities' demands of reconstruction and land accession. Finally the local Lebanese state is present in the camps, mostly through the municipalities. The relation may appear more discreet, but is no less important, via the connexion to urban services.

The presence of the Palestinian Authority – although the definition of the PA as a state is debatable – transpires at the international scale through its inclusion or exclusion of the refugees from its discussions and diplomacy. The main body officially recognised by the Lebanese state with an importance on the urban governance of the camps are the PCs. Originally these were emanations of the PLO and were in charge of the management, construction, reparation, and improvement of the camps' public spaces, development and maintenance of the electricity and water distribution networks, and the distribution of water and electricity itself. Usually each local PC being composed of members designated directly by the partisan alliance it belongs to. After the war, the PCs maintain a position of structuring organisations in the camps, being the main contacts for most of the organisations wishing to interact with representatives of the Palestinian refugees. The still separated PCs manage a part of the public distribution of water and electricity in the camps. They are also identified as the representatives in charge, to criticise or to negotiate with.

The formal non-state sector

If the PA and the PCs are supposed to represent the Palestinians as a nation, the components of the Palestinian nationalist world include other actors. This concerns at first the two main alliances of the Palestinian political parties in Lebanon, associated with either the PLO or the Coalition. The logics of the two coalitions are partly reflected at the local scale, but once again one cannot reduce the local to a “smaller” prolongation of the transnational and national: if the two alliances and the PCs they name tend to be strictly separated, their local representatives are often very much less so.

Besides, as discussed earlier, the political parties hold a role in the production of the camps’ landscapes, to an important extent. As providers of resources and maintainers of the relation of clientele between the camps’ inhabitants and the parties, the local members and cadres of Palestinian parties – who often are also members of the PCs – are always situated in a paradoxical situation, as both notables to be consulted and potentially mobilised for certain demands or requests for help on the one hand, and figures of forms of appropriation generally denounced by a number of refugees as corruption (*fasād*). As far as the urban governance of the camps is concerned, the position of party leaders is generally split between the necessity to provide clientelism and the shrinking of the available resources. In such a context, the role of political parties’ leaders has slowly come to rely on their capacity to mobilise armed strength, the management of scarce monetary resources, but also their ability to mobilise inter-knowledge and social resources, contacts, and “string-pulling” with institutions and organisations capable of mobilising the resources lacked by the parties themselves.

The Lebanese political world and “civil society” have an adventitious²² relation to the camps. The main presence remains the parties, as central actors of Lebanese political life, which play the role of political machines and arenas of mobilisation and structuration of these oppositions (Catusse, Karam, and Lamouloum 2012). In the post-Ta’if political configuration, and even after the withdrawal of the Syrian occupier, a consensus has been found on constraining the refugees and their spaces (Meier 2008). They are occasionally mobilised by parties willing to

²² The term implies a phenomenon bearing effects on another, while the two are not originally related.

represent themselves as the Lebanese national resistance to Israel, in particular Hizbullah (Khalili 2007a).

Another sector having emerged after the 1980s and having taken, for various reasons, an increasingly important role in the urban management of the camps, is the broad category of the NGOs, either transnational– in the case of organisations like MSF – national and recognised by the Lebanese law – such as Najdeh or Beit Atfal As-Sumud – or local. Although I return on this category in Chapter 2, we can note that whichever status these organisations have, the terms generally used to describe them are the same, either “NGO”, “association” (*ġama'iyat*) or “foundation” (*mu'assasat*). These associations are not always humanitarian and can include sports, artistic, religious, or village associations, beyond their differences. We can associate to that category of actors a certain number of recurrent social movements, which became institutionalised in tackling specific questions, such as the PYN.

The informal sector

Identifying extensively the informal actors participating to the camps' production could lead to the establishment of an unending list of short-lived groups, individuals, and networks, hard to map and more or less active. Expertise networks are essential in this category, whether they are organised around associations, NGOs, universities, or other research networks. These actors contribute, either on a way specialised on Lebanon or in general, to the production of doctrines regarding the ways to efficiently manage cities, slums, refugee camps, and the Palestinian camps of Lebanon in particular. One can think of notions such as “good urban governance” or “community participation”, which have been influencing considerably the urban governance of the camps by “technocratising” it (Misselwitz 2011). Thomas Weiss (2000) has shown the importance of institutions and experts networks in the rise and development of these concepts since the 1990s, in particular in association with organisations such as the UN, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund. The role of individual donors appears less obviously, but still transpires, especially in the camps' first years through the development of individual sponsoring of habitation units or specific improvements (UNRWA 1960).

As far as informal actors are concerned, the most important and notable phenomenon concerns the “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (Bayat 1997a, 2013), which appears much less unorganised than in the author’s models. Looking at the electricity and water distribution networks for example, one can see the collective effects of individuals and families coping in the camps, by hooking lines and cables to the collective networks, adding housing units to an already-existing building, which is regularly a private decision made by a family facing its own growth, and other transformations of space. These actions are not merely done, they are reflected upon by the dwellers. As Diana Allan has shown, a specific form of relation to these practices, at the individual level, does exist, would it only be to state that “everybody does it” too (2014). It is the collective transformation of the camps, and not the actions themselves, which is unplanned.

The existing informal infrastructure must be considered too: the presence of water and electricity shops is remarkable, and much organised. For an average household in the camps, the access to urban services does not consist in a single distributor for each commodity, but is closer to a compilation of several distributors, alternatively public and private, paid and unpaid for, and not always clearly identified. These business-owners have effects on the camps’ layouts by being at the origins of the development of infrastructures and networks, notably. These groups can be locally-situated, but the awareness, and sometimes the experience, of the situation in other camps, also plays a role in making sense of space in the camps: the experiences of certain projects or realisations in a camp therefore do have an effect on other camps as I discuss in Chapter 4.

We can finally include actors whose legitimacy or importance appears only in the informal realm, such as local notables, social movements, and “do-gooders”. This group is associated with a category of actors who can successfully claim legitimacy to speak in public in the camps in their own name, because of their reputation, and play a role, both in the identification and naming of local problems, but also on the processes of community participation and mobilisation.

Incomplete as it is, this model gives a clearer view of the essentially pluralist dimension of the camps' urban governance: each category of actors, as we have seen, is defined by a different position, both in terms of scale and status. As I will discuss in the next chapter, situating these actors in this social world will allow us to look at how they constitute themselves, the types of resources they can mobilise, and why they frame their relation to the world in such way and not such other.

III. Naming the political in the camps' public space: a pluralist proposal

In this part, I will discuss the ways actors situate themselves in this plural political system. At a first glance “politics” was a topic to avoid for most interviewees, who insisted that they were “not political”²³. Disinterest for the political appeared quickly as a prominent part of the life of activists in the camps. This could be explained in several ways. The question of the honesty of the actors could have been raised, considering the situation of interview in which these claims were originally made. As explained in the introduction, interviews are social scenes: “Narrating means developing a plausible version, which is one of many. Narrating means using certain words and expressions. Narrating means risking interpretations” (Demazière 2007). Rejecting the political can be a way to legitimise oneself in interview with a stranger (Eliasoph 1990). This tended to be confirmed by the fact that as the fieldwork developed these discourses tended to change, the political being more easily claimed. The question of political incompetence could also be hypothesised, but the informants never showed any difficulty identifying the various actors and institutions at play and the main differences between them. The political appeared as a very familiar, and at the same time very distant realm both in interviews and public interactions.

I propose to approach the question of politicisation through a contextualised analysis. I will rely on the model proposed by the French pragmatics (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) to explain how what has been described as “politicisation” can be instead analysed as the coexistence of several different repertoires of interpretations (Mooney and Hunt 1996), or “vocabularies of motives” (Mills 1940), defined locally and employed to refer to the world.

²³ This was particularly stressed by Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Nada, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Badia, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Jamila and Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Marwan, Shatila, January 2015; Samira, Burj al-Barajneh, February 2015; Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015 and in informal conversations.

A. Spatialised grammars of interaction: a linguistic analogy to study politicisation

A part of the literature has associated this rejection of the political to a phenomenon of “depoliticisation” (Jad 2007; Kortam 2008, 2011), mostly following James Ferguson’s argument on the “anti-politics machine” (1994). In the camps’ case this model seems limited. In the camps, the semantic confusion between politics as an activity regrouping parties and PCs and politics as a specific realm of activity. Jad explains how the imposition of NGO “project logics” tends to hamper the mobilising capacities of these groups: “NGOisation leads to the transformation of a cause for social change into a project with a plan, a timetable, and a limited budget, which is ‘owned’ for reporting and used for the purposes of accountability *vis-à-vis* the funders” (2007) instead of popular mobilisations. Project logics were observable in the field, but the concrete functioning of NGOs leads to relativising Jad’s argument considerably. To illustrate how, I will focus on the concept of politicisation and how I intend to refer to it further on.

Considering politicisation

Jacques Lagroye remarked how “Those who denounce it are in some circumstances the first ones to denounce ‘depoliticisation’, each notion designating in their view a ‘perversion of democracy’, of *the* political as they dream of it; to the point that one comes to wonder if there would not be, depending on the cases, a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ politicisation” (2003). Working on the relation to the political and phenomena of political avoidance, Eliasoph criticises a perspective according which the relation to politics supposes an externalised and autonomous political realm in which people would enter on occasion: “[S]ocial scientists do not usually open up different groups’ tool kits. Instead, they force respondents to speak seriously, forcing respondents to use a tool the respondents do not usually use, do not know how to use, or object to using” (1990).

This approach is coherent with A. P. Simonds’ critique of a “laundry list” approach to political capacity (1982). Against approaches proposing a model comprehending “politicisation” essentially as the capacity to see and describe the world in the same ways as the “professionals of politics”, Eliasoph argues on focusing on the ordinary relations to “the

public”: “Focusing on the public sphere transforms the search for a static product – that laundry list of facts or beliefs – into a search for a process, a process of conversation that cultivates or impairs citizens’ abilities to talk, think, and imagine together” (1997). Lagroye’s proposal is essentially similar, rejecting

judgements on politicisation or depoliticisation are usually made in normative terms; and the recurring question of the legitimacy of the practices of politicisation makes uneasy any attempt to define it which would be axiologically neutral. We shall nonetheless attempt to do so by considering politicisation as *a requalification of the most diverse social activities, requalification which results from a practical agreement between social agents inclined, for multiple reasons, towards transgressing the differentiation of the spaces of activities.* (2003)

This definition has the advantage of going beyond a strict division between the social and political orders, and to be empirically observable, especially in post-colonial contexts: “[T]hese so-called exotic fields can constitute privileged analysts of the processes of social production of the political to which J Lagroye refers. Beyond classical dichotomies (North/South, democracy/authoritarianism, Christianity/Islam, etc.), the exacerbated intercrossing of the inside and outside dynamics reveal the ‘layered structure’ of the political” (Aït-Aoudia, Bennani-Chraïbi, and Contamin 2010). This is particularly relevant in situations of politicisation under constraint (Vairel and Zaki 2011a), when “a politicisation of individuals could not pass but via a denial of any political dimension” (Aït-Aoudia, Bennani-Chraïbi, and Contamin 2011). Camille Hamidi proposes to redefine politicisation as “The ability of people to generalize – how, from one particular question, they see the broader issues at stake – and their willingness to assume the conflicts that lay behind the issue. (...) [W]hat is political is not the type of subjects mentioned by individuals, but the way they deal with the subject” (2003).

This definition has several advantages. First, it does not suppose a “laundry list” approach to politicisation. By focusing on the situational and interactional dimensions of politicisation, it also marginalises the question of inner “opinions”. Second, it pays attention to the concrete ways in which problems or issues are named, publicised, and turned into public controversies, while collective identities are named, resources mobilised, a specific public referred to. Third, the relation to “the public” is central. This dimension of social life, its structuration, and the

way people relate to it, are an essential part of identifying the political, putting at the core of this comprehension of politicisation the notion of “acceptability”: how people manage not to appear odd or out of place. Politicisation is not a form of acquisition of competences, but a socialised and conflictive process of definition of situations, groups, representations, problems, etc. in relation to a public.

A pluralist vision of the political: the pragmatic perspective

Among the several problems SMT started facing in the last decades, the problem of structure-agency has been prominent. The problem, raised by Ruud Koopmans in particular, can be resumed as follows: if one is to assume the decisions of participants to a social movement are influenced by a context but still involve some part of calculation, there must be a possible analysis explaining how the interpretation of context takes place, which lacks in most of the literature (2005). Koopmans’ answer, that political opportunity structures are “explores” by activists via trial-and-error, can be furthered by considering that the activity of trial is central to all social activity, as proposed by the French pragmatic framework. In this framework

The actors would have an ordinary sense of justice, a capacity for understanding what is just and adequate such that the negative feeling of facing injustice has its origin in an irritation of that sense. The ordinary sense of justice supposes an ideal moral order that can be reconstructed in terms of regimes of justification. One of the unique aspects of Boltanski and Thévenot’s model is that the very plurality of orders of value is part of the explicative model of moral sentiments. (Basaure 2011)

It also implies a particular focus on localised situations (Goffman 1963, 1974, 1983), in relation with a social structuration of a certain number of different types of frameworks to relate to the world. This plurality of orders is, which is the main interest of *On Justification* (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), is not linked to a de-historicised, or de-contextualised definition of the regimes of worth and definition of the public, as Blokker points out, the model contains a macro-social sensitivity by identifying both synchronic and diachronic axes through which one can compare the various existing regimes (Blokker 2011). According to Thomas Bénatouïl in this perspective “Practically all personal verbs indicate an action.

Human actions, from the pragmatic point of view, include constructing a theory, applying a category, justifying oneself, denouncing, associating with other human beings, failing to act, etc.” (1999). The focus on action leads to questioning what people do in the situations they are, especially of conflict, without positing the existence of an “internal” dimension to social actions: what matters is less the actors’ states of mind, but the ways they deal with the world.

These ways, which the authors call “polities”²⁴, “worlds” or regimes of worth, highlight a restrained plurality of ways to relate to both the public and the political: “In the context of a continuum [between the orders of the public and the private] a specific denunciation could potentially rise to the scale of generality by satisfying tests of normality or reality and moral legitimacy until it is established as a general cause, a *public issue*, and able to form a stabilised and recognised group” (Basaure 2011). Politics are unfolded through common operations of judgement, and get historically institutionalised, becoming as many ways to address the real.

This proposal has been explored on a variety of conflicts, as for example in comparing two conflicts around the installation of infrastructures in France and the USA (Thévenot et al. 2000). Close to Goffman’s framing analysis (1974), the authors situate the various justifications and normative orders mobilised by the actors, their specific aspect in each context, and the different ways in which the actors refer to them. But the pragmatic approach

²⁴ The original book referred to six “polities” or “worlds”: “In the world of inspiration, worth rests upon the attainment of a state of grace, independent of recognition by others. Its expressions may be diverse: holiness, creativity, imagination, artistic sensibility. In the domestic world, people’s worth rests on their hierarchical position in a chain of personal dependencies as expressed by their esteem and reputation. In the world of fame, people’s worth is expressed in the number of individuals who grant their recognition. Worth is unrelated to personal dependencies and to the person’s self-esteem. In the civic world, primordial importance is attached to collective beings, not to individual persons. Human beings may be worthy to the extent that they belong to or represent collectives. Praiseworthy relationships are those involving or mobilizing people for a collective action. (...) In the market world, actions are motivated by the desires of individuals driving them to possess the same rare goods. The industrial world is the world of technological objects and scientific methods. In this world, worth is related to productivity and efficiency” (Jagd 2011). We can remark that these “cities” have been enriched later on by the “green city” (Lafaye and Thévenot 1993), and the “projectual city” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005).

pays extensive attention to the competition between frames, and the tools employed in processes of framing (which are called “devices”). The aim is to analyse not only the content of judgement but also its modalities. The different “polities” described by Boltanski and Thévenot refer to as many different ways to approach and make sense of the world: “The hypothesis is that actors, on the same day and in the same social space, may refer to different worlds when they shift from one situation to another” (Jagd 2011). If every social dispute contains a reference to a justification, that is, to a reference to a certain form of public good (Thévenot et al. 2000), this public good cannot be presented in an abstract way as one single thing, and has to be identified in each specific society and context. In each context, there is something deeply social and constructed about how the “contentless consensus” which constitutes the various ways to tackle the public good (Madsen 1991).

On the topic of politicisation, the question therefore is to identify under which circumstances these processes can concretely be either “successful” or “unsuccessful”, following a particular “grammar” of action, “an immanent, empirically informed reconstruction that consists of an objective and systematic presentation of the structuring principles of forms of distinction, differentiation, judgment that actors put into play in daily life” (Basaure 2011). The notion of acceptability lies in the pragmatic model: “through the evaluative judgment of others, are imposed on pretensions of validity, expressed by actors in their critiques and denunciations in the form of objective evidence” (Basaure 2011). “Polities” appear as grammars of action in public space, dependent on the structuration of the public space in question, and reconsider the activity of framing in social movements, not as an apparent acquisition of cultural competences by the actors, but as an activity of making sense of a situation, stabilising it, and describing it, in relation to a number of actions, giving sense to the world during a conflict. The process of generalisation which is essential to a process of politicisation is never merely a generalisation from the private to the public, and from the apolitical to the political, but from a certain type of private to a certain type of public, following a specific grammar, both constructed and constraining.

Spatialising the framework: spatialised grammars of interaction

The pragmatic framework proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot, and built upon by other authors, has the double advantage of proposing an approach which accounts for the coexistence of several different ways of apprehending reality, without overlooking the way reality constructed as it is perceived. This model of a non-determinist immanent normativity (Basaure 2011) sheds a particular light on the construction and effect of context, both in the restrained meaning of the term – which involves a particular focus on situations of interaction, in the sense of Goffman – and on the broad sense of the term – which still involves a sense of structuration and determinism, but observes them from a very small scale. This explains the comparative endeavours of authors fitting in this framework (Blokke 2011). As explained by Clive Barnett, “There is a ‘light touch’ geographical imagination to this range of social theory, registered above all in the sensitivity to context, a concern with situated action, and a comparative mind-set. Somewhere in among philosophies of action, practical reason views of ethics and pragmatic sociologies of critical capacity, there is an opportunity for developing the analysis of plural geographies of worth” (2014). Barnett’s proposal, involves attempting to merge the model of pragmatic sociology as proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot, and approaches in human geography paying attention to the representations of actors.

Following the presented proposals, I suggest following a model in terms of *spatialised grammars of interaction*. The concept of *grammar* has had a central place in pragmatic sociology, but finds a particular place in the work conducted in social theory by Cyril Lemieux, as explained by Elsa Rambaud (2016). Lemieux proposes a grammatical social theory relying on an importation of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s definition of the concept. The seven first propositions given by Lemieux (2009) give a broad understanding of the way in which he frames the concept: 1. a grammar is “the totality of rules to be followed for one to be acknowledged, in a community, as capable to act and judge correctly” (2009: 21); 2. “a grammar is what allows members of a community to correctly judge, i.e. to link correctly to descriptions the discontinuities happening in the world (...) and to feel obviousness toward certain descriptions” (2009: 23); 3. nothing humans are capable of describing can be so without a grammar (i.e. there is no “natural” description) (2009: 23); 4. “Describing a discontinuity introduces in the world a critical relationship every time the grammar does not make that discontinuity explicit” (2009: 24), or in other words people are capable of

perceiving abnormality in a description; 5. and 6. the description of an action only makes sense when made in the terms of the appropriate grammar (rejecting ethnocentrism, Lemieux calls “Frazer’s mistake” the attitude which consists in concluding that someone is bad at playing chess, while he actually is playing checkers) (2009: 24), and 7. to evaluate a description, we can relate on the feeling of self-evidence arising from the correspondence between it and the action it describes (2009: 25). Lemieux’ model is therefore inscribed in comprehensive sociology and the interpretation of rationalities, but opposed to methodological individualism: “1. the individual’s rationality is not thought of anymore as one but as plural and potentially conflicted. In other words the conflict in action intervenes at the very level of the individual and not at that of the aggregation of individual actions; 2. none of the rationalities conflicting ‘within’ the individual can be less rational than any other. They can only be less grammatically adequate to the situation” (2009: 129).

If this definition of a grammar is particularly useful, Lemieux’ other endeavour must be acknowledged, his ambition to develop a *methodological universalism* (2009: 7), and the way this epistemological position leads him to propose a universal and an-historical set of grammars. In the context of this case study, I am on the contrary attempting to reproduce a local set of meanings, setting the spatial context at the centre of the analysis. The structuration of the camps as spaces has effects on the representations and acceptable ways to make sense of the world of those engaged within it. It plays, in the Goffmanian sense, a role of *social situation*, this “little social reality” governed by “a certain set of rules” (Goffman 1963). The actors’ determinations matter as they are engaged in situations: “Taken all together, the primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principal classes of schemata, the relations of these classes to one another, and the sum total of forces and agents that these interpretive designs acknowledge to be loose in the world” (Goffman 1974:27), or in other words, framings.

Robert D Benford highlighted the way in which the conception of “framing”, as used in SMT, has always been marked by a tension between the *grammatical* and *indexical* senses of the term, and the static comprehension of the latter (1997). Framing is neither restrained to conflict, nor a voluntary or strategic action, but an action closer to perception and experience, of understanding the real and describing it. The main input from the pragmatic perspective is

to situate this activity in a pluralist perspective and in situation, where several different grammars are copresent and can be employed by different actors. It stresses the implied procedures of proof and test. These grammars are inscribed in the social space of the camps, and are linked to the production of this space. Space thus appears as a primary social mediation available for the camps' dwellers in order to express themselves, name problems, issues, conflicts and generalise them, and therefore politicise situations. In order to develop this argument, I will now return to the question of depoliticisation to show how this category can help us reconstruct three of the grammars observed in the field.

B. The political, the associational, and the familiar, identifying three grammars in the camps

To make sense of the avoidance of the political, I wish to resituate it in context, and return to the local meanings given to the term “political”. The term was used in the camps in order to describe a specific realm of the social world, containing the activities of partisan politics, especially those of the political parties and the Lebanese state. Being “political” was in that context synonymous with taking part in the activities of and conflicts between parties. Being “non-political” means something insofar as it made sense for the actors (Candea 2011). Political and apolitical or politicised and depoliticised appear indeed very much as primarily a category employed by the actors to describe the relations and realities they live in. The fact that all can be politicised does not imply that all is perceived and lived as political, and the fact that the apolitical is never self-evident does not mean that it does not carry some extent of reality for the actors. As Mattei Candea puts it: “If ‘politics’ simply becomes the new real against which the (always ultimately illusory) production of the non-political is to be studied, then we have just exchanged one set of blinkers for another” (2011). Rejecting the negation of the political dimension of their engagements into either “depoliticisation” or “hidden politics” would provide a good normative viewpoint on the phenomenon, but little analytical interest. Following the proposed model, we can reconstruct the meanings and dynamics of generalisation revealed by these declarations by reconstructing the frameworks they indicate.

Different ways of interacting with the public: three ideal-typical discourses

Following the elements proposed by Thévenot, Moody, and Lafaye (2000), I look at several elements in public discourses in the camps: the qualified order of worth, the typical type of test used to refer to it, the forms of relevant proofs, the qualified objects of this test, the legitimate actors engaged in it, and the specific space mobilised in it. To these elements I decided to add the scale the representation values, as well as the specific resources put forward by each discourse, and the relation presented to the political as a local category. The reason to add these elements are related to the need to reconsider the model through the geographical lens, focusing on the type of relevant public and therefore the type of generality presented. The inclusion of scale in the model should show how what is perceived as the appropriate audience of the discourse. I will start with reproducing three exemplar cases of the discourses I wish to illustrate.

- The partisan grammar

All this problem, is it a political problem?

Of course. Everything hem... everything related to Palestinian people, related to political issue. When you talk about hem... civil rights, or what else, the human rights, everything is entangled in politics, because it's the topic of the Palestinian people. The question of the Palestinian people or the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is directly a topic entangled in politics. I'm talking about the right of work, the right of work is a human right. If you want to organise a march on that it's a political topic! The political parties for instance are concerned with the question of the right of work. So if a party is not with the Palestinians he will say that the right of work is actually implantation. So the Muslims are going to be more important than... for instance. And you also can have coalitions between parties between such and such faction who will profit of the campaign on the right to work to say they're the ones who did it, so all of this is intricate with politics. I mean all of this is entangled. The right of return, also, same thing, we talk on the right of return, maybe it's a bit different, but it's political, maybe it's not Lebanese politics, it's international politics, when we talk of the right to return. When we talk of the right of women, in Lebanon, it's the same as the right of women in Lebanon because we live under the Lebanese law. And what else, well, it's all in politics. All, there is

nothing I could call a problem detached from politics. Sexual harassment, maybe, or violence against women are in the same case, in the same context. For instance, for instance, I want to talk about one example. For example, in Burj al-Barajneh, there was a case of sexual harassment, there was a woman she suffered from something mentally. They raped her like that, it's not sexual harassment it's more, so the NGOs and organisations wanted to start talking about this topic, and the PC stopped the topic, because one of these people is the son of a member of the committee. You understand? I mean, they silenced the topic. And if someone maybe, on the question of the schools, for instance, the schools, it's the same thing! There is a teacher who participate in sexual harassment a lot on the students, in UNRWA! And he is employed in this area, when the topic went out and he was under punishment, he was moved to another school! Why, because he has opinions and he is considered for his political stances. All social problems are attached to questions of politics.

So on this I mean, I talk with many people and they tell me they're doing things, no, what we're doing is not political, what we want to do is just improve people's life, and we don't want to be involved with politics, you know what I mean?

You talked with normal people? [Yes] Ah, normal people they are not in politics. That's not what I'm talking about, me what I'm talking about is general politics, general politics like the law, the system, systems, networks, that's politics. Those who say they're not political mean that they're not in parties, I mean. That they're not in the system. They're not Hamas, they're not Fateh. They're ordinary people who want to live. They care about their society and that's okay. Our work is social, not political. We don't participate in such or such party, our work is social. But I'm talking about it as a problematic for the GBV, it's an issue of politics, of general politics. (Badia, Beirut, January 2015)

This excerpt is representative of a partisan grammar of expression in the camps. Emerging from the activity of the political parties and national Palestinian institutions, this grammar is qualified by the presence of an order of worth focusing on the Palestinians defined as actors engaged in a collective struggle of liberation. The first frame applied here marks a direct rise in generality toward "the Palestinian people and refugees", identified as the audience of the problem described. The underlying meaning of the "entanglement" described by Badia is attached to the particular mode of valuation she is referring to, around the national liberation of Palestinians. Participating to solving the problems Badia is focusing on is seen as important because "all things [are] entangled" to the question of the Palestinian predicament. The types

of problems and objects legitimated in this grammar are not subjected to a distinction between what is or not political. When describing local issues in the camps, Badia relates them to “all the problems concerning the Palestinians”, including the questions of the right to work or to return, the Lebanese law, actions such as marches, and specific resources such as ideological competencies.

This is reflected by the types of relevant actors, such as the Lebanese state, UNRWA, and the political parties. Even as these institutions are being criticised, they are included as part of the system of relations around specific issues. At the same time her rejection of the “political” actors is not a rejection of politics, or the Palestinian national struggle. Corruption is used to delegitimise the parties and PCs as opposed to the national liberation and interest of the Palestinian people and diaspora. This is coherent with the specific space referred to, which is the space of a Palestinian diaspora: “The Palestinian people or the Palestinian people in Lebanon”, marked by “the right to return”, or on contrary “implantation”, are located in camps but always in camps scattered across countries, but exist in relation to this wider Palestinian universe.

- The associational grammar

Yes we did also a study. And UNRWA did a study.

Was it done by specialists?

Yes by specialists, from the associations, and from UNRWA. Some people came as well the American University. Of course, people from the American University, there were some studies... [A professor?] Yes there was a professor and there were some researchers, they did social studies in the camp. (...)

[UNRWA and PCs] did do a few installations for water. They augmented a bit the electricity. I mean, but in general it's not in a good state, there is no good state. The European Union came in the camp for, like, a month, like a voyage [She laughs], and had a project with them for the basics of electricity and water. And they gave some funding for UNRWA to help with that. (...)

In the end, your movement, what is it trying to do?

To improve the Palestinian condition. (...)

Is your movement a political movement for you?

You mistake two things together. What is social and what is political. Here it is social, it is social. I swear it's social.

So what's the difference between political and social?

Political it means demands on the question of earth, of the return, of the rights of the Palestinian people and what it wants, the relation with international, Arab nationalism, all of that is political. The social it means the problems of the camp. That's all. [She laughs] The camp, what is its problems, we see that and we work to improve its condition. And what we do the main thing is social work.

And for you political problems are not...

It's two things you must not mix. They don't mix. I mean I have the demands of the camp, seriously the demands of the camp, here, there are so many of these demands. That we need to solve. And that's the work of the associations, and it also has an impact. Because people don't say with who are you, you are political. (Samira, Burj al-Barajneh, February 2015)

The identification by Samira of "the Palestinian" takes a different meaning from the first example. Though Samira evokes the question of return or the existence of the Palestinian struggle, she does not include her work in this framework. I would attach this specific meaning to an associational, or what certain authors would call a "NGO-ised" grammar of expression in the camps. Here the approach to the public implies a different form of valuation, relying on a worth formulated in terms of common development of the refugee communities. The Palestinians are foremost understood as socially deprived actors, and the tests are not realised in terms of approaching the liberation of the Palestinian people, but in terms of "demands" and "needs" that "need to be solved", which are presented by Samira as the definition of what she calls "the social". In this grammar, the most relevant actors are situated through the lens of NGO work and involve associations, grassroots initiatives, and various sorts of expert networks. Contrarily to Badia, Samira presents a rupture between the two

dimensions of “the social” and “the political”, not only because of the qualified actors, but also in terms of the meaning of each sector: the sector in which Samira inscribes herself may concern political actors, such as members of parties or the PCs, but it refers to a different type of common good which is not defined by “the question of earth, of the return, of the rights of the Palestinian people and what it wants, the relation with international, Arab nationalism”. The reference here is made to “needs”, and these “needs” are object to a specific kind of proof, which is forged through the mobilisation of different competences: what is valued the most in this specific grammar, for a fact to be audible, is its production as a scientific fact, thus making sense of the presence of research and investigation and its place in the discourse. The grammar situates the situations in terms of a geography of deprivation, in which the camps are similar to other deprived areas in the world, and in which the translation of problems as well as solutions is possible. If Palestinian-ness is not excluded from this framework, it is situated as a different issue, which Samira places outside of her concern. The expression in scale takes the same sense, being expressed both through the camps, but also transnationally.

- The familiar grammar

These people they want the camp to be always dirty and to, it's a matter of corruption, they want people who they like to... and give money to the factions and the factions take money for themselves. [She laughs] (...) We should, without you, to do, lonely, what we need. From community to community, remember what I... so if we work together we can change all problems inside Shatila, without NGOs or etc., or some people giving money to... (...) I feel very good and very proud also, not also for myself but also for my friends. Because not all my friends are Palestinian, some are Syrian and Lebanese, they're not all from Shatila camp, from inside and outside Shatila camp. And not all my friends were poor, yes. So I feel very happy. (...) When the camp became bad, the people who could go left to live in better places. These people had the money for that. But the people who didn't have money, stayed in Shatila and suffered, from a lot of things inside, because we became minorities, small, and we didn't change. Because if we work only with Palestinians, when he talk, if somebody wants to change something he talks only about Palestinians, but this is a very wrong thing because not only Palestinians live in Shatila. Shatila is Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian. So if we want to

do things, something to Shatila, we should all work together, and people from Bangladesh, too, I work sometimes with Bangladeshis. In Shatila. Any people live in Shatila, I try to work with him and talk with him and I try to do some solution for this life. (...) We should work at women, because women is the most important thing to change the society in her thinking, to teach or learn the kids, and talk with neighbours, and how they communicate with others. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

Here we see the presentation of a third way to refer to the public, the familiar grammar. The audience is not presented as “The Palestinian people” anymore, but as the “community”, attached to the camp itself, in terms of the extension of family networks, but also of relations of friendship, both in and out of the camps, which seems to seek at transcending the particular Palestinian-ness we could find in the previous registers: “Shatila is Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian”, explains Amira, claiming her concern is to act “from community to community”.

The most striking element in Amira’s discourse seems to be how she inscribes what she does and how she relates to things in a geography of closeness and familiarity rather than to a “distant” entity such as the Palestinian nation or a space of poverty and, to do so, seems to claim a scale adequate to this representation, that of the local and the habitual. It is through that habitual dimension, and in particular by valuating through the frame of the communal wellbeing of inhabitants, and via reputational resources, that this grammar imposes itself: to be acknowledged and considered as real and acceptable, a claim has in this framework to be attached to the lived experience of acknowledged members of the community, as individual or non-institutional groups (families and friends, in particular). The continuation between family and community relationships evoked by the authors can be found in her reference to women and the importance of education within the familial unit, which she puts in equivalence with the actions to be had within the camp, and is recurrently reminded in her interview by references to her own family, in particular her relation to her father, who she claims has imbued her education with this vision of the world. Shatila camp itself, in this specific form of grammar, appears as the relevant level through which divides relating to other levels – notably the divide of national identity – have to be negated or neglected. The divide she develops is instead between people living inside and outside of the camp, although it is not absolute as she evokes her friends on the outside. By doing so, she puts forward a different form of avoidance of the political to the one presented by Samira in the previous excerpt, one which

situates the political actors and the political world outside of the concern because of a conflict of interest between the community she is trying to present and the Palestinian national community, whose representation implies “keeping the camp always dirty”.

Representing the grammatical model

These are examples of modes of referring to the public in a space marked by a multiplicity of actors, scales, powers, and spatialities. What I insist on is the embedded nature of these different elements; we must comprehend this model as coming together at the same time in a process of social construction of reality. These models are the reflection in place of social relations, which are institutionalised alongside them and on which they work as a constraint, and which are at the same time reflected in space, while being equally influenced by the constraining dimension of space. They can be mapped as follows:

	Partisan grammar	Familiar grammar	Associational grammar
Worth	Collective Palestinian struggle	Communal wellbeing	Community development
Test	National liberation	Trustworthiness	Development / Relief
Form of relevant proof	Ideologically determined needs and demands	Lived experience of trusted members of the community	Rationally determined needs and demands
Qualified actors	Parties, Lebanese state, PCs, institutionalised actors	Individuals, families, friends, dwellers	NGOs, associations, grassroots activists, expert networks
Geography	Palestinian nation in diaspora	Familiar universe / Neighbourhood	Palestinian refugees as deprived communities
Scale	National / transnational	Local / Translocal	Translocal / Transnational
Resources	Ideologies, representation	Trust, authority, reputation	Technical capacities
Relation to politics	Claimed	Avoided, negated	Avoided, rejected

Table 3: Three spatialised grammars of interaction

The most important element here is that this model neither represents a constraint weighting on specific actors permanently, nor are they attached to specific topics. They constitute stabilised ways of perceiving and naming the real in public space in the space of the camps, and I approach them as in continuation between everyday interaction and the framing of collective problems. They also provide us with a framework which allows comprehending processes of framing as fitting stabilised, durable, and non-random grammars. As Daniel Cefaï would put it, they are “neither mere resources of rational cognition and action, nor the phantasmagorical stuff of collective deliriums” (1999). To that extent, the concept of “grammar” can be related to Patrick Mooney and Scott Hunt’s “repertoires of interpretations”, in so far as “A repertoire of interpretations suggests that movement participants (re)interpret and (re)construct systems of meaning already present in their lifeworlds. Second, a repertoire of interpretations suggests that rather than the espousal of a single master frame, movement participants can draw upon several persistent master frames to (re)construct their ideological claims” (1996), taking a step further into seeing how these repertoires are anchored in non-public or non-political relations as well, and how they serve as framework for the politicisation of discourses and situations.

IV. Conclusion of the chapter:

In this first chapter, I have presented the parallel production of space and power in the camps. These two phenomena must be considered as coming together, and the camps' space appears as epitomising the social and political relations which unfold around its production. The experience of space in the camps is not attached to a single logic, but is not either an entirely free and independent phenomenon, led by the agency of those dwelling in it. Because the spatial is a dimension of the social (Ripoll 2013), the spatial representations in the camps can be described as institutionalised and relatively stable elements which are then employed to make sense of the world in this specific space. What I have called “grammars of space” are mainly a tool to make sense of this structuration of the social in space, which allow us to perceive the ways in which several orders of expression coexist and are available to the actors as implicit codes defining the order of what can be acceptably done or said within this space. Similarly to the “aquatic space” described by Ulrich Oslender in his account of the mobilisations in the Pacific regions of Colombia (2016), these grammars form as many ways to apprehend the social and the political, and as many different ways in which the public is structured in the camps. The definition and constitution of the space of the camps is attached to the definition and constitution of “the political” within these spaces, not only in institutional terms – who is in charge? – but also in representational ones – what is and is not political, how to confront these oppositional notions? – and what should be highlighted, rather than if the camps are being depoliticised, is how the manners in which the camps are politicised change and evolve.

Having laid out this “gross contextualisation” of the political as it appears to be experienced in the space of the camps, I now propose to consider the effect it has on the organisation of the specific type of collective actors we are interested in, namely the activists working on the “problems of the camps”. In the next chapter, I will use this framework in order to present the organisations I have been studying during the fieldwork, and how these specific collectives can be defined each in its own way.

Chapter 2: Forms of collectives in the camps

Najdeh put its status of NGO forward in its public interaction frequently. This relation to the status was not always as clear-cut. In other cases the status was rejected, even when the groups were associated with it from the outside: Markaz al-Naqab's activists were clear that being a NGO meant being attached to funding and obeying someone else's agenda, not referring to the camp dwellers' actual problems. Interviewing different members of the same organisation led to similar differences. The PYN's core members generally presented it as a militant organisation, while more recent members and other people were more familiar to its NGO components. These dissimilarities show how the NGO category is less about belonging to a homogenous group defined in statuses or actions, than not belonging to other ones. As with most organisations, when observed from a microscopic perspective, how this social group was constituted and held together was not self-evident.

Siméant and Sawicki promote a multi-scalar approach to engagement that does not merely consider them at the mesoscopic and mesological level, but also at the microscopic and micrological one: "Militant organisations, as *organisations* and whichever their degree of institutionalisation, work on individuals and are being worked by them" (2009). Organisations have to maintain participation and recruit members, which implies that recruitment itself can change organisations. Several studies have taken a similar inspiration and looked at NGOs and citizen engagement from an ethnographic perspective (Eliasoph 1998; Hamidi 2003; Lefevre 2007; Sbeih 2014; Siméant and Taponier 2014). They show the importance of looking at the activists as social groups in organisations, to understand the ways these organisations work.

In this chapter, I will follow this line to describe the studied organisations through their “inner workings”, associating them to the interactional grammars described in Chapter 1. I will return on the category of “NGO” and “civil society organisation” to question their coherence and focus on exploring how each organisation is structured as well as the forms of relations they engage in the camps with other actors. The NGO sector functions like a social world. The production of their collective identity is influenced, as discussed by resource mobilisation theory, by the internal struggles between several sub-groups with different perspectives, experiences, and resources. If NGOs are not primarily concerned with the organisation of protest, a certain number of their activities developed as forms of contentious mobilisations, making NGOs the unexpected organisers of particular forms of social movements. I spatialise this analysis by looking at the influence of the local structuration of a spatialised grammar of interactions on the valuation of specific forms of resources available to NGOs and by describing how these organisations, both at the individual and collective levels, engage in processes of resource valuation in place.

I. Between NGOs, patronage networks and social movements, describing the “civil society” organisations

Distance from political action was one of the most shared traits of the description of the NGOs’ activities, even when relating to collective action. One would add that they were “simply trying to make life better for the people of the camps”. Integrating these actors to an approach in terms of social movements was therefore questionable on several accounts. The groups did not fit the common-sense meaning of “social movement” as mass mobilisation (protest, sit-ins, etc.). In this part, I make the argument that under specific circumstances the observed NGOs contributed to the emergence of social movements, although under another form than that most commonly experienced throughout the world. The grammatical model developed earlier allows describing how forms of contention emerge following pragmatic regimes of engagement to the world. The engagement of social contention under the form of “civil society organisations” makes sense in the context of the modifications which have been described earlier.

The first section will focus on the theoretical argument. After which, the two following ones will focus respectively on the description in details of the trajectories and structuration of each of the main studied organisations, allowing us to see how the “NGO sector” is a category which contains very different social and political logics and histories, and on the ways these groups must be understood beyond their official actions, as actors participating in local politics through redistribution and forms of patronage in particular.

A. Activism, social movements, and “the civil society”

Formally and status-wise, beyond a common reliance on donations and in some cases international funding, the organisations had little in common. The associational world is characterised, as I describe later, by a broad variety of actors and types of actions. The part of these groups’ activities I focus on can be analysed through the prism of social movements. What does or does not constitute a social movement can be questioned by such boundary cases, in particular as they confront the concept to non-European and non-American contexts: “Our capacity to fill the notion of examples goes with a common incapacity to understand, or even see, social movements in other societies or other periods” (2005:5)²⁵. I argue in favour of considering more acutely the effect of context on repertoires of contentious action, which “evolve as a result of improvisation and struggle. But at any given time, they limit the forms of interaction that are feasible and intelligible to the parties in question” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2008:49).

If NGOs participate to the political economy of the camps, identifying when to speak of social movements, mobilisations, or activities of social relief appears complicated nonetheless. In this section, I will discuss under which circumstances actors such as NGOs can at least partly resemble social movement organisations. We see how the transformations at the international level of the functioning of NGOs, associated with transformations in the political system of the camps, and to the development of the associational grammar in the camps, takes the appearance of a change of the political opportunities structures as perceived in place, in which mobilising along the lines of NGOs becomes a possible and apparently efficient choice.

²⁵ This in particular constitutes an answer to Tilly’s argument that social movements must refer to a “historically specific complex” for pursuing contentious politics with a historical emergence in the “West” and a later diffusion across the world (2006:7). More than a critique of that perspective, I propose looking at cases of contentious action which do not fit Tilly’s definition, partly because of a drastically different context, but which can be approached with similar tools.

Social movements and NGOs as artificially separated notions

You know it's sure I need money. I mean me I am Syrian, and you know how it is in Lebanon, everything is so expensive you need so much money. For instance my house, I live, but I will show you later, I live in very small house, I have on the sixth floor, maybe a room for sleeping, a kitchen, and a small space for hum... but it is so expensive! For a small house how much do you think I pay? I pay 250 dollar for a month, and it's a very small house! It is better than the house I live in before, next to the Swiss tower, but still it is very expensive and small, for me and my child only. So I need the money from the project it is sure. But also I mean for me it feels good that I am doing something for the people, me it's the first time I work for NGO, and NGO it means, doing something for the people, that's what it means. So we have money for helping them, the people, and you see that in the streets, when the people see me they say 'Ah Tariq you are, you know, a nice guy, you are very helping with this'. So it is good that for me also, that people can be, I mean, that I can help all the people like that. It is something we do also maybe for a change, that it makes the life for the people better I mean. And then they know us and me, also they know Najdeh, are doing good for the camp, you know.

You say it's important that your job helps people?

Yes of course! You know it's so important. Even when you can't help I mean everyone. Let me tell you something, if I am in Najdeh, maybe a lady will come, and she is Syrian and needs something, help, something. Maybe we have something, or maybe not. Even if I have not, I know everyone, all organisation, so I can tell her ask to this and this, they have something for you today. I can help if someone is poor, you know, a poor man, and I see, I know, because also I do so many visits, I go see this house and this family, because I have known them because they're Syrians, I know this poor man needs something, perhaps I can help him with food, or a parcel or something for him or his child. So I help him. (Tariq, Shatila, February 2016)

Tariq's engagement in Najdeh's Cash for Work project is the latest in a series of jobs in restaurants, hotels, shops, and a supermarket. Tariq got his position through his knowledge of the association but also because of the "good reputation" he had built in his various jobs in the camp. Tariq's discourse about his situation regarding Najdeh was typical of activists in the

camps, especially those engaged in NGOs²⁶. This was confirmed during an incident at the Cash for Work office later on. Days after this interview I found him having a lively discussion with a young man, reprimanding him for his lack of trustworthiness. The discussion went on for a rather long time, during which it was made clear that the young man had missed several days of work, but has also criticised the programme, describing it as greedy and inefficient. This particular point especially angered Tariq. Not only, he said later when we discussed the episode, he had accepted the presence of the young man out of a personal favour for him and his family – and, as later conversations implied, a specific political leader – but he felt as if he was himself being cheated: “You know I am a chef, I could work in another place. I can find work tomorrow if I want, and make more money! I am here because I like to help! And they come and say this! I tell you, I don’t know what I will do, this is so useless”. If Tariq could present his engagement as a way to make money in some situations, maintaining an image of selflessness was equally as important. The term “activist” generally covered this intersection between social work, paid work, and militancy. This also applied to the organisations, which were simultaneously presented as benevolent as well as professional actors.

The relation between NGOs and social movements in the Palestinian camps has been the subject of scrutiny and criticism. The period preceding the Oslo Conference has seen a lot of interknitting between NGOs and political actors, especially the parties. At the period, authors had already started questioning the possible political effects of the arrival of money from international organisations (Nakhleh 1989). The argument emerged later that NGOs did not empower, but in fact demobilise social movements in the Palestinian society: “The older mass organisations were open-access structures with public agendas, aiming to mobilise the largest number of students, workers, women, and youth into organisations serving each of these sectors. The newer ones, in contrast, are active in cities, run by an urban middle-class elite, and are smaller entities, dependent upon foreign funding” (Jad 2007). The criticism of this process of “NGO-isation” has often been associated in the literature (Hanafi and Tabar 2005) and in local discourses to a crumbling of selfless or ideologically-motivated engagements.

²⁶ This association of paid labour and activism was the case of all interviewees in Najdeh as well as the PYN, except for Bassam who explained he got engaged without retribution.

The process of professionalization long observed by resource mobilisation scholars in SMT (McCarthy and Zald 1973) is also described by Sbeih Sbeih in Palestine (2014). A number of remarks can be answered to this impression, beginning with the idea that it is unlikely that any engagement ever occurs entirely “selflessly”, whichever the symbolic and material retributions expected and obtained from engagement (Gaxie 2005). Professionalisation can for example be seen as a stabiliser of participation (Sawicki and Siméant 2009), in particular in a high-unemployment context.

The activism/social movement in the camps is a fuzzy one, in particular as the “classical” repertoire of marches and demonstrations has been appropriated by the parties. Diani’s definition of a social movement as “a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (1992) has the advantage of marginalising a “laundry list” vision of social movements. Based on this approach, I argue that NGOs are not defined either as social movement organisations or on the contrary as the opposite of social movement organisations, but as actors which can, under certain circumstances, engage in social movement practices. The same goes for what concerns the institutional definition of participants: “the choice between a grassroots organisation or a bureaucratic lobby appears more and more frequently dependent upon tactical calculations by social movement actors” (1992). The question of the shape taken by social movements is particularly relevant in the case we are interested in, as it offers the occasion to question how engagement is done, in context.

Engagements in the associational grammar: evolutions in recruitment

In the 1990s, the development of NGOs in the camps follows a number of different logics, the main ones being the departure of the PLO from the country in 1982: “This departure left a void in the domain of service provision – the importance of which had increased in front of the restarting of discriminatory practices against refugees from the Lebanese authorities. Facing this passivity, some Palestinian non-profit associations – sometimes already existing, sometimes created on the occasion – could enter the political system by replacing little by little the services previously offered by the structures weakened

after 1982, that is to say the PLO and UNRWA” (Bianchi 2013). At the international scale sources of funding move from states to private donors and from private donor to specialised agencies (Lefevre 2007). This logic is accompanied by the development of a toolbox around the notion of advocacy, associating logics of professionalisation and technicisation: “advocacy appeared as a new category of international aid that emerged at the end of the 1980s. (...) The term ‘advocacy’ thus seems to have belonged to the vocabulary used by major international donors to define their relationship to the NGO sector and to the actors claiming to represent civil society, at a time when such institutions were being widely criticised” (Siméant and Taponier 2014).

This is the period in which the associational grammar takes shape in the camps, pushed by particular actors, emerging during the War “such as Najdeh, Bayt Atfal As-Sumud, ‘Aidun, or the Palestinian Human Rights Organization, which develop different logics centred around service-provision or advocacy for rights, but under an increasingly-distant framework to those promoted under the period of affiliations with parties” (Bianchi 2013). For Munira, who had been socialised in the revolutionary period, inscribing Najdeh’s work in an international humanitarian perspective had been a necessary adaptation:

We multiplied the ways in which we work with women, as volunteers we felt that we had to care about that because we needed to teach more about that. So we started teaching that and started learning more about that. And we encountered professors from abroad, from Tunis, from Egypt who gave us workshops even over there, since a long time we were able to attain awareness workshops about that. (Munira, Shatila, March 2015)

The conditions of recruitment in Palestinian NGOs are essential to identify the transformation of the structures. As the period of strong Lebanese repression over the Palestinian camps ended in the late 1960s to give room to a “revolutionary” order promoted by the PLO, several of the older members of NGOs showed the intricacy between community-aimed nationalist engagements on the one hand, and concerns for their professional future:

At first, when I married, I mean I was staying all the time at home, I was staying all the time at home. And I reached a point when I needed to go out. And my friends contacted me on that, and I felt I needed to do something. And after I started I got to join an association called the Women’s Union, which took care of organising activities for the children, and after I also

joined the Association of Young Muslim Women, which did libraries and other activities. Many things, everything, it was necessary to do something you see. I also participated in an association called Na'ash and participated on projects there, and with the PLO I made many workshops about health issues, we were working with the Swiss on that. My father accepted I did that, my mother did not accept. And my husband accepted. He accepted but he was afraid. My mother thought that if I studied too much I would change too much also. That I would become too different (Munira, Shatila, March 2015)

What was the reason that made you volunteer in the first place?

Because I'm Palestinian. I'm Palestinian and my people, Palestinian people suffered from many many wars, and I mean, problems, social problems and, so, as Palestinian I have a role, I have to do something, I mean.

Were you, I don't know approached by an organisation that told you you could do it with us?

You see in the camps, and particularly during that period, everything was opening. There was the creation of a few organisations attached to the PLO, there was at that time the creation of Najdeh, and there was will, in these organisations. So we started to work in these organisations to help the Palestinians. And then your friends, your relatives, maybe for instance A., she was there before me, and she asked me to help, A. who works in vocational training.

So because you had friends and relatives who were in it, you also started?

Yes. Yes. And we related to camp, I mean, to camp! To people! We have this feeling you see. In Najdeh the first thing was after Tal el-Zaatar, after the massacre of Tal el-Zaatar and many men found death in it. And many women, widows, found themselves in need of help, Najdeh opened for them. So we started the project of embroidery, and then created the kindergartens so the women could put their children there during the day. And then we started the social affairs programme for social help, and after that the vocational training and then... (Badia, Beirut, February 2015)

At the period of the creation of organisations such as Najdeh, following the massacre of Tal al-Zaatar, joining organisations mirrored a certain form of engagement within the community in resistance and in revolution, especially in the case of women, whose contribution to armed struggle was frequently prevented. In parallel, several other elements emerged, showing how,

already in the 1970s, engagement could not be reduced merely to the influence of the “nationalist narrative” on the refugees. NGO engagement was included in a longer career, including presence in party-based youth organisations in particular. Following one’s friends, and continuing professional careers were also influential motives. In Najdeh most activists engaged on the long term have described the biographical effects of engagement, especially in terms of residential careers. Although locally anchored, the NGOs were present simultaneously in a broader space, constituting of the situations of interaction of a wider system of interaction, which in return contributed to the socialisation of the NGO activists themselves, as I discuss in Chapter Four.

From the 1980s onwards other narratives on engagement emerge, as activists enter an already-professionalised world. This model was also, during the 1990s and early 2000s, linked to the fear of repercussions from taking public positions. This facilitated the recruitment of a type of activists who associated strongly with the associational grammar, but had been present before. Khalila’s joining of Najdeh in the 1980s was facilitated by her experience in academia, while she could not rely on participation to a political party or other social organisation, and had not grown up in the camps. For a “younger” group of members, the process of joining NGOs had greatly changed and the testimonies differed:

How did you start [volunteering]?

It was three years ago, after I entered the university, Mr Fadi came and told me that I could teach to children here, because they are poor, the children, and they can’t afford, you know, to pay the fees for the school. I did it as a social service you know. (...)

But you are paid for these lessons?

Yes it is a job. Also I work for Pursue.

How did it begin also with Pursue?

Three month ago. I talked to the boss of Pursue. (Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015)

I am in Pursue since one year and half now. Before I was working a lot with Mr Mansour though, because I was a volunteer and I worked with the Palestinian Cultural Club in my University. That was in 2005. Also when I was in Europe I was a lot with the Palestinian

support organisations there. Later when Ahlam Laji' was created I helped them because they needed help for translating documents or making assessments, and since I speak several language and because I was to the University, I speak French and English and that's... also I met H. and W. at that period, even if we were not doing things together. Also what I did as a student, I did my dissertation on the PLO and later it got published as a book. Even if I didn't live in the camp myself. (Umar, Beirut, February 2015)²⁷

The contrast between the testimonies hints at the rise in importance within these organisations of a group of actors already present in them, but marginal. Beyond individual stories these actors all presented similar dispositions adapted to the change of dominant grammar: a small or marginal experience of the political parties, a degree or experience in higher education, mastering of foreign language(s), and experience in social sciences or research.

Associational activism and “the civil society”: social movements by other means

Associating NGOs and social movements is debatable, primarily because the NGOs' aims, even in the most active of their participants' view, was never to provoke a radical change in society as a whole. On the contrary, efforts were made to moderate any rise in generality and maintain the NGOs' actions under a certain degree of conflictuality. Nonetheless as observed by Bianchi a number of NGOs did import elements of the repertoire of actions classically associated to social movements, as well as representations and framings coming from these organisations. Therefore, although it would be exaggerated to consider NGOs as social movement organisations per se, observing the part of their activity which participates in social movements through the lense of SMT allows to understand them with more precision.

²⁷ Beside Umar, other interviewees evoked their university or work experience as determinant in their activist career: Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014; Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Marwan, Shatila, January 2015; Jamila and Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015; Yazid, Mar Elias, March 2015; Mona, Beirut, April 2015; Redwan, Mar Elias, April 2015; Tariq, Shatila, February 2016; Amira, Shatila, April 2016.

Engagements under the NGO umbrella can be seen as adaptations to a changing structure of opportunities. The concept serves to illustrate how “the political context, conceptualized fairly broadly, sets the grievances around which activists mobilize, advantaging some claims and disadvantaging others. Further, the organization of the polity and the positioning of various actors within it makes some strategies of influence more attractive, and potentially efficacious, than others” (Meyer 2004). There is a relation between accessible funding, available social resources, the dynamics of recruitment of activists and the forms of their activism.

But these structural changes did take effect through a modification of the representations in the camps as well. As Kriesi explains “Movement actors will make their strategic choices on the basis of their appreciation of the specific chances of reform and threat, and the specific risks of repression and facilitation they face. (...) The debates within movements typically turn on questions of ‘relative opportunity’ for different courses of action. (...) Opportunity may shift in favour of some specific part of the movement” (2004). What we can observe in this situation is the transformation of the modes of apprehension of the social world, and their effect on what is perceived, not only to be feasible, but also to be efficient, in terms of collective actions:

Some people in Najdeh tell me what they do is not political, it's not demonstrations, but gatherings.

Yes, yes. If people say it's going to be about electricity some people go, they're not afraid, but if there is something, something that looks like it's connected to, something, they're gonna be afraid. That's a problem.

So I wanted to know what you think of that difference between gathering and demonstration, what's the difference for you?

A gathering is because of situation. The situation of people, while the demonstrations are for, general things. I mean general situations like the problems of the country, because we are Palestinians, the work, because we don't have the right to work here, we work, there are 98 professions we are forbidden to work in. The youth don't have the right to work in them. 98 professions. It's forbidden to work in them. That's a demonstration, we go to the Lebanese state, we do placards, we go to the Red Cross, we go often to the Red Cross as well to do

gatherings, especially for the prisoners. So when we do gatherings, they're just about specific issues. Specific for us in the camp. (Um Muhammad, Shatila, February 2015)

Um Muhammad's discourse expresses a distance with the partisan world, less due to an ignorance of its existence than to the certitude that it would lead the movement to effectively fail, associated with a certain form of socialisation and the acquisition of certain political competences (Mathieu 2002). Post-Oslo, the perceived political opportunity structure changes across the entire Palestinian diaspora with the generalisation of the NGO model. As Sbeih explains, associations become in Palestine an important form of employment for the parties (2014:95–96). In Lebanon the situation varies, as the relation with the international NGOs, but also the resentment coming from the “abandonment” by the PLO leads to a form of financial independence from the parties (Bianchi 2013), encouraged by the increasing recruitment linked to the transformations of funding internationally:

Has Najdeh taken distances with the DFLP?

Naturally. Sure. At the beginning it was not like this. There was a close relation between the DFLP and Najdeh. Now it is different.

What has changed?

Hm, I think the perspective of the DFLP towards the importance of the local action was changed. In a sense, they noted it is important that the local NGO can do some of the actions, completing political actions. So they are doing political actions, and the NGOs are doing humanitarian actions that the DFLP cannot do. Not only at the national, but regional and international levels. (...) They noted also the importance of having independence and good relations. Me, I'm a member of the DFLP, I must say, but I'm practicing my vision not inside the organisation. (Layla, director of Najdeh, Beirut, April 2015)

This change of focus also implies an imposition of the donors' agendas on the organisations', but only to an extent. The development of this model does not impede the contentious dimension of activism, which is regularly evoked by activists themselves:

When you try to improve the people's livelihood it is always going to be political. Because when you criticise what somebody does, he is always going to think that you are doing something against them and against their faction. That's why it is always difficult to be an

activist, because they don't accept what you do. For instance if I am going to talk about electricity in Shatila, they are going to think that I am trying to do something against them. So some of the guys were fired. For instance Taha and Yazid, you met them, they were in Fateh, and they got fired after they started with the PYN, because the people of the party thought he was doing things against Fateh, so they got fired of it. (Umar, Beirut, February 2015)

Whether it is perceived as politics or not. I'm talking about something very basic: politics equals translating the will of people in act. And the will of the people, now, it is the daily life! So I say let's do that! It is democracy after all. And even people who say, they don't speak politics... when you're talking about all these problems, you are talking politics! Everybody talks about politics, all the time! (Khalila, Beirut, February 2015)

The meanings of what an organisation is or is not depends upon a broad history of changing opportunities, but also more closely on intra-organisational changes. In the following sections, I will look more closely at the internal organisation and history of the main studied groups, to show the various logics of conversion and engagement marking their members and investigate their heterogeneous dimension.

B. Comparing associative groups, a description of the actors

The NGO sector formed what Becker calls a world, which “contains people, all sorts of people, who are in the middle of doing something which requires them to pay attention to each other, to take account consciously of the existence of others and to shape what they do in the light of what others do (...) and adjusting what they do next in a way that meshes with what others have done and will probably do next” (Becker and Pessin 2006). In this section, I will present the collective career of the three main organisations I have studied to show how their development can be resituated and illustrates an inclusion in the grammars I have presented earlier. To give an idea of their organisational structured, I have roughly recomposed the three main studied groups based on my observations, to highlight the relation between the diverse members and parts of the organisations. Figures 15 to 17 are thus not exhaustive figures, but as close as I could get on the field.

Najdeh: from a nationalist NGO to local self-help

The history of the Najdeh association is the most often associated with the beginning of the Civil War and the massacre of Tal al-Zaatar, when the organisation emerged to face the humanitarian crisis:

When people fled from Tal al-Zaatar, we opened the kindergartens, in Sabra. But there was at that time the kindergartens and embroidery and that's all. And after was created the project for social work, also I worked in that. And after that I learnt about violence so we started a project on that also. For all Beirut at first, and now mostly Shatila because the centre has grown bigger and the work also. (Munira, Shatila, January 2015)

In the earlier years, the organisation was supported by the DFLP. The party, in the second part of the Lebanese Civil War, was opposed to Fateh, and more specifically Yasir Arafat's policy toward the early stages of the Peace Process which feeds partisan strife in the early 1980s, as explained by Yezid Sayigh (1997:578–80). Those clashes led to the return of Palestinian fighters to Lebanon and the ensuing War of the Camps. With the decrease of the USSR's power and the beginning of the Oslo Process, the PFLP and DFLP also lost resources. As resources decreased for the factions (restricted by the USSR, and redirected toward the Iran-Iraq War by the Arab countries), Palestinian NGOs such as Najdeh to look for alternative sources of funding in the early 1990s (Bianchi 2013).

Najdeh's organisation relies on a distinction between camp offices on the one hand, which are charged with applying diverse projects in specific camps, and specific programmes, which exist independently from the offices. The most exemplary programmes managed by Najdeh are related to women's and children's rights (such as the mother and child programme which manages kindergartens, the domestic violence programme, the general advocacy of women's rights in the camps, and the embroidery programme which remains from the association's first years), but also programmes of micro-credit or support through the provision of debit cards on which a given sum is set monthly, vocational training directed towards women, and more recently a number of initiatives directed towards the urban, either directly or indirectly.

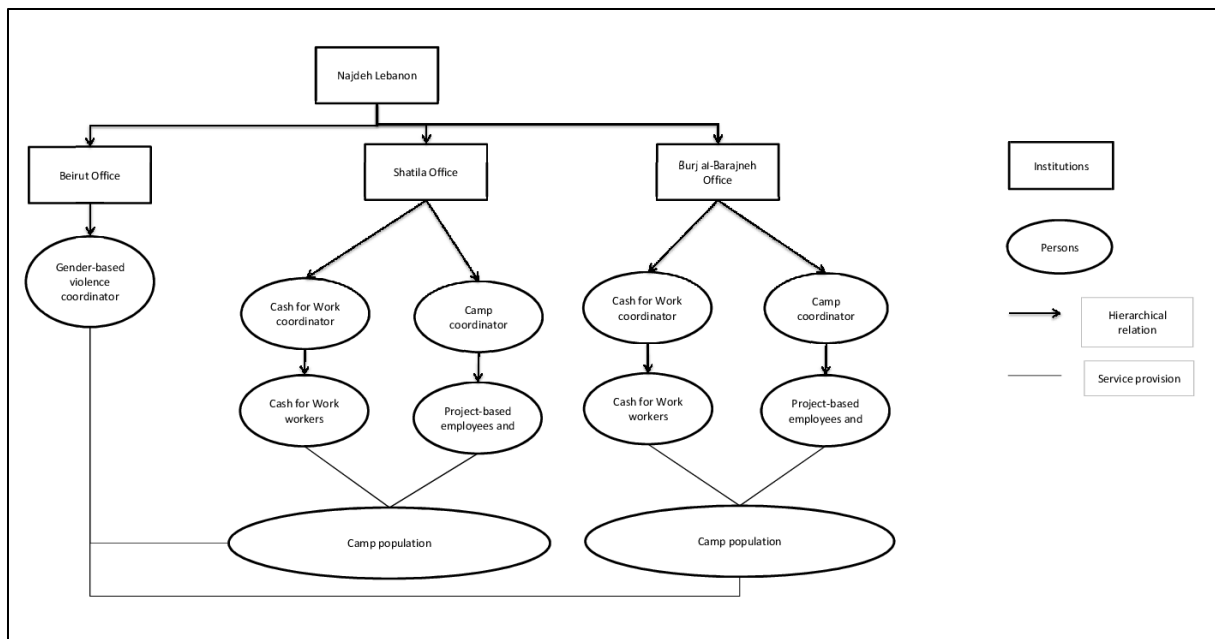


Figure 15: Najdeh as a network, a hierarchical structure

After the Civil War the organisation imports more contentious modes of action and enters big campaigns for the right to work. The organisation of training and formation not only of its members, but its public, participates to the collective learning of the associational grammar. In the field, this was first identifiable via the heavy presence not only of the logos and imageries of international funders, but also of a vocabulary directly coming from the realm of international NGOs, in the everyday conversations of the activists. For Bianchi, this change in the “internal culture” of the organisation was used as a strategy to secure funding in the 1990s (2013). On the development of the campaign against gender-based violence, for example,

To tell you the truth we approached that through the topic of human security, because that is the term used internationally also. But lights and alleys, it's also human security, because as I showed you people don't feel safe, so there is the feeling of insecurity, but that is also security, the feeling of insecurity. And... everybody knows that! And also there were previous campaigns on these questions, we were not the first. On the lights, some people did things before. Some of them said let's do the lighting, this and that, and those initiatives are there and we don't say do something new, we're trying to encourage to continue what is already being done. So we're trying to adopt a participative attitude rather than a patronising attitude. The

links to addiction also made it more palatable for the PCs, and the goal was also to make people talk about it. (Khalila, Beirut, February 2015)

Najdeh maintained a network of mobilisation, relief and help, through the children and women centres and by organising kindergartens, in particular, but also through the development of some support through the distribution of credit cards, and more discreetly through the maintaining of “good relations” with the camp communities. The influx of refugees from Syria in the 2010s marked both the presence of a new public and a new membership. In Burj al-Barajneh, Najdeh became an extension of emerging self-help groups which were beginning to organise themselves around Bassam, a teacher from Syria close to the DFLP. From Bassam’s engagement in particular, Najdeh’s office in Burj al-Barajneh became a place where Syrians and Palestinian Syrians could obtain some support and help. Further on, some were employed by the association’s office, both in Burj al-Barajneh and Shatila. With the development of international interest for the question of the Syrians and Palestinian Syrians in Lebanon came other opportunities of funding for Najdeh. From the donors’ perspective, the priority was indeed put on these populations:

We decided that the amount of Palestinian refugees from Syria and Syrian refugees was the biggest in Shatila. So we decided to support them there. And since 2013 we’re working in Shatila. We started with food voucher and since 2014 we’re giving unconditional cash assistance to all Palestinian refugees from Syria registered with Najdeh, there are no criteria, and then to 20% of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, who are extremely poor. We started this in 2014, with \$100 a month for the PRS, and 50 a month for vulnerable PRL. This year, due to the reduction of UNRWA’s assistance to refugees, we decided to also assist Palestinian refugees from Burj al-Barajneh. But due to our limited funding we decided to give only \$50. (Jamil, HEKS (Protestant Churches of Switzerland Aid), Beirut, February 2016)

In 2014, the association's activity and its scope was therefore relatively diverse, ranging from practices of resource distribution and advocacy for rights to punctual participation to a set of normalised political contention focusing particularly on the claim of rights to work, education, and social security, for the refugees in general, and the Palestinian refugees in particular. In early 2015, a few gatherings took place directly in the camps, especially in Burj al-Barajneh, in which the participants demanded the solution to a certain number of issues, in particular local ones such as the insecurity of the electricity networks, the renewal of the sewage facilities, and the question of education for Syrian children. These gatherings took place in a context of particular interest of some camp offices for urban issues. During the year 2015, finally, a test project run in Shatila by a member of the organisation, Marwan, aimed at focusing on the pollution of the streets by garbage. After a short test, the initiative was turned into a project HEKS' support, and eventually became one of the most important of the association's programmes in the Beirut area, the "Cash for Work" initiative²⁸.

The PYN: political conversions and the logics of "the civil society"

Following the failure of the Local Committee in Shatila in 2005-2006, a number of persons who had been close to the initiative began displacing their action away from partisan activism and more directly into the associational sphere. The organisation was composed of local associations²⁹, and the activists shared a common story of finding through the PYN an occasion to get support in front of isolation at the local scale:

²⁸ CfW initiatives have been employed by international NGOs in a number of situations and are not an innovation emerging from the Palestinian camps of Beirut. The conditioning of relief or assistance to work was on the contrary uncommon in the camps. CfW emerged in the late 1990s but truly gained importance through the experience of international relief organisations during the 2000s. The term "Cash for Work" itself concerning the garbage collection programme only emerged after HEKS began participating in it. In its form, the CfW project was largely influenced by an international donor's strategy.

²⁹ During the fieldwork, the PYN's website evoked associations in half the camps in the country, the main ones being located in Shatila, Rashidiyeh, Baddawi, and Ain el-Hilweh.

It started, there was, about two years ago, there was a fight, that was broken out between two groups, toward the hospital Haifa, it's very far from my house, but in the end it's in the camp so every person in the camp is engaged in this fight. What happened, there was one person, a friend of mine was killed, the other was wounded, and three others were taken to jail. It was furious, it was in the New Year's Eve. 31 of December 2012. It was very scary. When you hear the fire, you hear the police, that was very scary, that made people all asking themselves from where did this weapons, who gave the order to fire at each other? It's not fun, it's a residence for people there. That makes us think about how are we, are we safe in this camp? We tried to talk to all people in all ages in all interests, that there is a big problem, if this time was there about two dead, next time there may be ten. From this ten it could be my brother, your friends, your relatives. That's the reason. Also with the other reasons about infrastructure and services. (Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

We started the association a few years back, with two friends we were thinking that we cannot do much in the [Fateh] party. We were very active in the party back then, but it became... impossible to do anything. I mean we wanted to do good, but in the end it was blocked. So we started here, about education, because that was needed by people, and we wanted to do something, to really do something. (Fadi, Shatila, April 2016)

For a lot of members of the PYN, especially those constituting the core group of the organisation, having been engaged in partisan politics and disappointed by it was an essential biographical event. Most of the members of the PYN relied on a description of parties as rigid structures which did not permit working in the common interest of the camp dwellers. Some members were still in contact with the parties, but the common story remained that of collectively taking distances from these organisations:

In 2000, you know there was an Intifada. And I was all over everything. This just was North [Where he comes from], okay? After that, Fateh was working in the North, but in a secret way, because of the Syrian, you know. They connect us, they connected me and say, we are thinking to have a [he pauses] student union, and we are thinking that maybe you can be the president. So I said okay. (...) I began knowing all the students and have meetings and... After six months, we have a problem and I am out of all of that.

What was the problem?

[He laughs] The problem is they ordered me to do something. And I was telling all of the time

I need to discuss and no-one orders me, I have the right to say yes, and the right to say no. If Alex tells me you do so and so, and I cannot, I say no. They refused, and said oh, you can't be responsible of this union and say no and yes. So I say okay, I'm out of all of this. (Taha, Mar Elias, March 2015)³⁰

The emergence of local associations created by former members of parties is the first act in the common story of the PYN. For most core members, reconversion to action in the “civil society” was an exit strategy from Fateh, and more broadly partisan activism. Once the associations had been created and began acting on several issues, the collective fear of being repressed by influential political parties, and the close-knitedness of the PYN was generally presented as the second act. The PYN was formally created in the early 2010s around the main associations. Another linking element was Mansour, an older member employed as a development consultant for an international relief organisation, after leaving Fateh. Mansour's employer and the PYN were interpenetrating, the first providing training and support to the second, as well as occasionally employment and, equally as importantly, an organisational network for the activists, although the two organisations remained formally separated.

³⁰ Partisan experiences were also evoked with Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014; Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Umar, Beirut, February 2015; Yazid, Mar Elias, March 2015; Fadi, Shatila, April 2016.

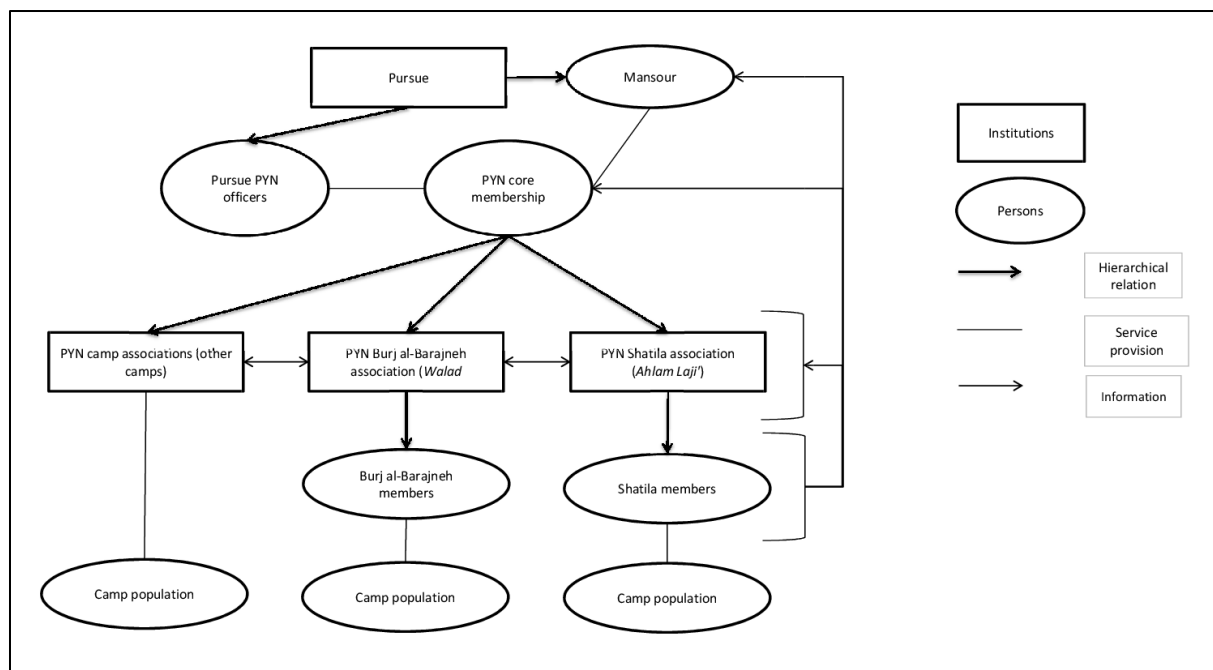


Figure 16: The PYN as a social network, two interpenetrating organisations

The PYN thus consisted in a group of separate and more or less formal associations linked together both as organisations and through a social group of core members, who had known Mansour and worked with him in Fateh or the Palestinian Embassy, or joined the organisation later. In Shatila as well as Burj al-Barajneh, the core members also reported having long been friends together before creating the member associations and joining the PYN. The tension between a political interest – strictly separated from the forms of politics practiced by the political parties – and an organisation which focused on forms of action openly related to the associational grammar was visible and experienced by the activists at the several levels of the organisation. In Shatila, in particular, the bad memory of the Local Committee's failure had convinced most core members of the inadequacy of confronting the PCs and parties. For the core members, social work was a way to continue political engagement by other means. This connection was less obvious for members present at other levels of the organisation, especially members with no prior engagement experience, as I discuss later in this chapter. Even though the contentious activity of the PYN was never hidden to them, these members were primarily interested in the organisation because they perceived it as an employment possibility in an organisation of "good reputation". Emerging from diverse camps and focusing on different topics, the PYN was for each organisation the occasion to put in

common concerns, experience, and methods.

Beyond maintaining a social network, the PYN's main activity was to publicise the "problems of the camps", as is described in Chapter 3. Compiling of data was done through formal occasions, such as meetings and the organisation of a poll via a website, but also through the informal inclusion of the members in the camps: by taking photos of the camps and publishing them on the internet, talking to authorities of the camps and persons of "good reputation", and by using their own experience of the camps, the members contributed to formalising their centres of interest. The PYN engaged with a number of self-help initiatives in various domains, and participated in the organisation of a number of cultural and memorial events, especially through its cultural and artistic clubs. In the first half of 2015, the group's practice of expertise and investigation led to a series of public meetings in Shatila with the political parties and members of the camps' PCs.

Most of the camp dwellers invited to these meetings had been previously encountered in "awareness raising" events, and introduced themselves as "simple people" or "children of the camp". Systematically, the meeting began with a general presentation of the situation, generally presented by people in the audience. This was supported by the testimony of members of the PYN who used charts or pictures comparing the situation in various camps to support their claims. The organisation of anger was also in general an organisation of the "rise in generality" from the camp dwellers, switching with the support of the PYN's investigation documents from personal claims to the enunciation of a more general problem and responsible, in both case the incapacity of the factions and PCs to solve the problems. Arguments, but also provocations, interjections, and the reference either to lived reality or data were effectively framing the problems of the camp, but at the same time those responsible for them and, therefore, the solutions, as is described in Chapter 3.

Markaz al-Naqab: the merging of different logics and groups

Markaz al-Naqab (“The community Centre”) opened in 2014 in Burj al-Barajneh camp. The group’s core members described the origins of the group as the coming together of two previously existing networks. On the one hand, a number of members came from student clubs and activism turned toward the Palestinian refugee question from the university, especially in the American University of Beirut. These activists told of their frustration of working outside the camps, and “meetings where people just talk”. For Mona, one of the founders, anchoring her engagement in a camp had appeared as a necessity. Another part of the membership came from a group of friends living in the camps, who used to meet casually. Through being concerned with the situation of their living areas, and to start a few direct actions to alleviate it (such as painting some public walls, or collecting garbage polluting the streets). The beginning of the merger between these two groups took the form of a “good occasion” for each to develop its action in the desired direction:

So I’ll go back in time. To January 2013. We have been wanting to work with them for some time. Number one, because they don’t have any political affiliation, and they’re present in the camps, and working on... They are just people that we have worked with in the past, you know? And we’re friends, on some level, and you know. We wanted to work together with them. On a project. So originally the idea was to work on a scholarship fund, do some funding, and work on a fund for students from Gaza. And then it was, okay, but for this we need a lot of funds. And then all these Syrian families appeared, they suddenly moved, were forced to move in the camp, yeah. So we were like, okay, we need to do something for them. So we conducted, together, a series of, all the youth groups together, a series of camp visits, in Burj al-Barajneh and Shatila, and asked them like, what do you spend your money on, what do you do during the day, are your kids in school, when did you arrive, you know, just general... We went to their houses, and did a series of home visits.

As a study, or?...

How do they call it, forms [*Istimārāt*]? Just like, for our information. Right? So, but the main thing was to get, find out how we could possibly help in this shitty situation, what could we do, what could our role be, so the idea was oh, they need a community space, most of them stay in their houses, their houses are overcrowded, and you know, obviously we cannot be a relief organisation, because we’re all, we don’t have a capacity. So the best idea would be a

community space, you know, where either we could have classes or come and, have coffee, play chess, play *tāwilāi* [backgammon], watch TV, watch news, use the Internet... this was the original idea. (Mona, Beirut, April 2015)

The organisation's main activities consisted in organising support classes for children, especially from Syrian and Palestinian Syrian families, but also showing films, organising conferences (for example, on the applicability of the notion of resistance, or on the Boycott-Disinvestment-Sanction movement). This was also framed in the context of maintaining a collective memory of the Palestinian community: "If I teach *Fidda'i* [the national anthem] to one kid, I am already doing something for return. If I paint one flag on the wall, I am already doing something also. So here I can teach *Fidda'i* to many kids, that's what we are doing here" (Aziz and Abu Sufian, Burj al-Barajneh, April 2015). By looking at the common story of Markaz al-Naqab, the inclusion of actions in a familiar space was important, as was not being affiliated not only politically, but as importantly financially, to any organisation. The group opposed the NGOs' dependency toward donors and primarily relied on individual donations through the organisation of fundraisers, in particular a concert which had taken place in the university in the group's early days:

Let's look at what the work the NGOs actually do in the camps. Education, women, women's rights, conflict resolution, psycho-social support, and maybe like micro-finance, micro-loans. These are all major things that I have seen. These completely are disconnected from the situation that people in the camps are refugees who want to return to their homeland and have the right to return to their homeland. It is, I mean they're breaking it down and say that if actually you had the skills, you would be able to move yourself from this situation of poverty and I don't know what. So it's not actually focusing on the fact that they're refugees in a country that is racist and, you know, doesn't give them any rights. (Mona, Beirut, April 2015)

In short, the group was defined by its twofold approach to its inclusion in the camp, both as a local institution, which aimed at participating and benefiting to the community, and as a group which aimed at doing so politically.

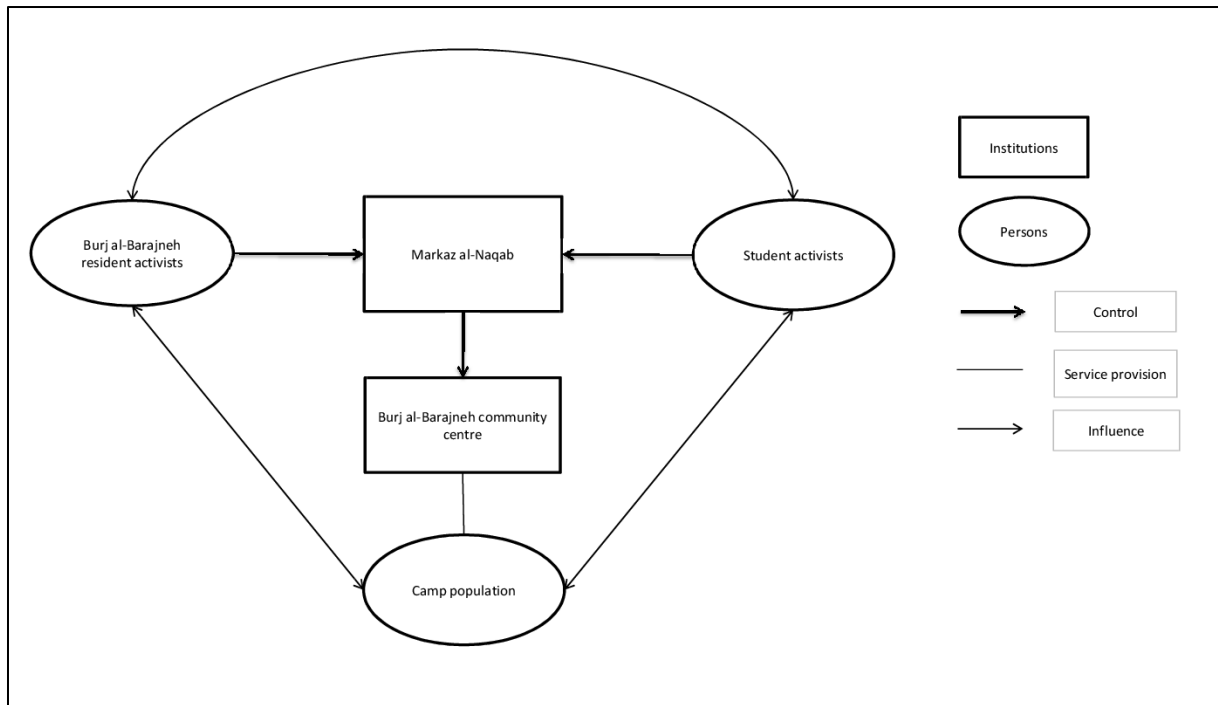


Figure 17: Markaz al-Naqab as a social network, the merging of two groups

The “NGO” category covers a variety of groups which have little to do together, and that the question of how the groups situate themselves in relation to the category, including by rejecting it. The collective trajectory of the organisations has in particular an important effect on their current forms. These different groups’ histories can be seen as their development alongside lines of relation to the public, carrying their own “logical” actions, representations, frames, and relation to the camp. The organisational structure of an organisation like Najdeh does not merely emerge from it being an NGO, but also from its historical identification as a group which emerged to face a national crisis in the manner of the nationalist groups of the 1960s and 1970s, working at a national level, and was pushed to integrate the associational grammar as it was being developed in the 1990s. Similar observations can be made regarding the groups which eventually became Markaz al-Naqab, and were originally anchored in two very different universes of comprehension of the camps.

The study of some members of the “NGO sector” in the camps shows how it is more understandable when considering its members not from top-down categories, but from their specific development and through a focus on their interactions in context with their locale. In the following section, I will discuss these interactions by describing the way these groups are inscribed in the system of interactions governing the camps, and focusing on how they contribute to this system of interactions.

C. The “civil society” as a political actor: patronage, brokerage, and mobilisation

Today I am visiting Shatila with Anwar, who works with Mansour. As we are walking through Shatila, Anwar introduces himself to me as having worked with Mansour for the last 10 years and currently working for an organisation which focuses on support “from people to people” [in English, I later find out that this is a part of the PYN]. He presents this group’s work through the angle of participation and voluntary work, insisting that it is an apolitical group. Anwar’s work, he explains, consists in surveying the needs of the population, writing syntheses, and sending them to Mansour’s organisation to unlock funding and develop projects. Anwar points several times at projects which have been realised, he says, thanks to his work. In a part of the camp, fuse boxes have been installed for each house to increase the safety of the network; elsewhere, the cables have been merged to reduce the size of the “cable web” which hangs above the streets; lamps have been fixed on walls in other alleyways. These projects are never aiming at the entire camp, but remain small-scale, “To show what can be done”, explains Anwar. Anwar gets regularly interrupted by bystanders, who greet him, and exchange a few words. As we reach the Palestinian Youth Centre and its square, Anwar gets stopped by two persons successively and engages in a vivid discussion with both. They point at different parts of the street. After the conversation, as I enquire as to who these persons are, Anwar explains: they are representatives of two political parties and are discussing some of the camp’s problems and way to solve them. Part of his activity is to remain in relation with these people: “They know me, and they know they can talk to me. Me, I’m with no party. If I wanted I could, and there are parties who... I mean I think that such party does a good thing sometimes, you know?” he explains. The parties are essential in realising the various projects he does, and central in naming the needs of the camp. (FD, November 2014)

Like other actors, parties were never absent from the life of NGO activists, as transpired from the research experience itself. After evoking my difficulties to reach the PLO PC of Burj al-Barajneh with Najdeh's local coordinator, she secured me an appointment with a simple phone call. Redwan similarly obtained me access to both Mansour and the PC in Mar Elias. Despite the constant insistence that most people had nothing to do with political parties, and were merely doing a job for an association, the daily practices in the "NGO sector" and the social sectors activists I had access to show a different situation.

The term "civil society" has been criticised for the artificial separation it establishes between the political and associational worlds (Leca 2003). The category appears fuzzy when used as a scientific concept. For Krishan Kumar, "If we are concerned about the abuses of state power, with recognizing and promoting pluralism and diversity, with defending rights and enabling individuals to act politically, what is wrong with the language and terms of such concepts as constitutionalism, citizenship, and democracy? None of these, it appears, need to invoke the concept of civil society" (1993). As an emic expression, the term unveils a lot on the working of the NGOs. I will particularly be looking in this section at how adopting the associational grammar appeared as a way of continuing not only careers of political engagement, but also collective struggles.

Continuing politics in another way

Both in Najdeh and the PYN, the history of the relation with partisan organisation can be pointed out. As Redwan or Mansour, the NGO sector was often a place of reconversion from previous experiences of engagement into the "civil society". As Michel Camau explains, the idea of a "civil society" separated from the political society makes little sense outside the actors' discourses (2002). Claiming to be a part of such a group, therefore, must be apprehended as a way to frame one's engagement.

The case of the PYN shows a number of examples of conversion of struggles in the partisan sphere into struggles between the partisan sphere and the "civil society". The situation of the PYN is to an extent relatively similar to other similar reconversions (Badimon 2011). The choice of acting in "the civil society" is linked to a number of elements, including the activist

past of the core members of the PYN, the existence of divides in the parties and choice of a collective strategy of exit, and the capacity for the actors to succeed in that reconversion as a NGO. For the group, this was not an exit from politics, or from relations with the political, but a way to continue such relation under other terms:

You are interacting with all people, as you said, the Palestinians in the camp we all know each other. Some are relatives, some are friends from school, some are friends from the university. We know each other very well, as an activist of my age. The problems are with the superior responsible. That's the problem. We're saying every day, what could happen, let the people talk. Let the people talk and watch the truth, is it good or bad? Let the people say that and then we can see with the committee or the responsible for the organisations to take their responsibility and to do something about it. (...) What is political about it is as I say there are about 18 political organisations, Palestinian political organisations, 18. All them say that they are responsible about the Palestinian people in the camp to make them safe and make their life better. Okay, I agree with this talk, but when there is something wrong I should ask you why did it happen. They say it's out of our range it's not our problem we can't solve it. If you can't solve it don't tell us that you are responsible for us. So you are lying to us or you don't have enough power or good strategy to solve our problem. That's the problem. Some people inside the camps have been threatened by this, because they engaged very much in these issues. (Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

This type of continuity was not an exception. In the first case, the association maintained constant good relations with a number of political groups and actors, but also opposed them in a number of domains. In the second case, the shape taken by the organisation was considered by the activists as a reaction to what was perceived as a dysfunction of certain forms of activism, in particular that of international organisations. Choices in terms of organisation and action do not happen in a vacuum: seeing what is being done, and what does not seem to work, the activists are in a situation of learning the various constraints in the camps, and adapt to them. Retracting or converting from the partisan to the associational grammar is not, therefore, a way to "leave politics", but is inscribed in collective and individual stories.

Redistribution, patronage, and receiving relief

It is around 9 in the morning. In Najdeh's Burj al-Barajneh office, the activists have arrived about half an hour ago. More of the room's seated places are already taken: one person is sitting behind the desk at the entrance on the left, two others behind the other desk facing the door. Since I am early for my interview, I am told to sit between two members on one of the couches. There are four or five additional people sitting on the couches in the left corner, between the two desks. Nothing is really happening, and nobody seems to be expecting anything in particular. The people at the desks, especially, are working on filling paperwork, the others engaged in a discussion, showing one another Facebook posts and photos on their telephones. Someone wants to know where I am from, if I am married, my education, etc. Someone enters with a pot of coffee and a few cups on a tray, and coffee starts being served. We have all been drinking coffee for about ten minutes when a woman enters the room carrying a child: "Is this where we come for help?", she asks. "Are you Palestinian?", answers one of the persons at the desks. She is. "Palestinian Lebanese?", she is not, she is Palestinian-Syrian. "We do not have any help today, come tomorrow. Or try Sumûd, they may have something", she is answered before leaving the place. Before my interview happens forty-five minutes later, similar scenes will have occurred three or four times, following the same routine. In some cases, the person will be asked to sit and fill in a form. On others, to sit and just participate in conversation. (FD, January 2015)

Observing the NGOs' routine from the offices was the occasion to clarify their role in the camps' life. NGOs constituted one of the primary sources of relief and support in the camps. Not only did families receive support from NGOs via money and relief, but also through the organisation of schools or kindergartens for the children, cultural or leisure activities, football clubs, computer rooms, support and visits to those hospitalised, or in some cases employment. This presence in the everyday life of the camp dwellers makes the organisations, their local premises and members particularly important. On several occasions, interviewees insisted on the NGOs' trustworthiness compared to the political parties³¹, because of their action in the camps and their role in maintaining a decent everyday life. The

³¹ This was stated in Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014; Jamila and Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Nada, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015; Umar, Beirut, February 2015; Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015; Tariq, Shatila, February 2016.

presence of the organisations' offices and locals in the middle of the camps contribute to this proximity and this inclusion in the camps' social relations as well. The activists insisted on the place of concern for the camps and their population in their practice. For Najdeh's members, for example, the direct integration in the camps, associated with the presence of the organisation's office on the daily routine of a number of camp dwellers, contributed to constructing a vision of the organisation not only as a provider of services to the community, but also as one of its members:

Did you know Najdeh before you worked for them?

Yes. It's an organisation that helps people a lot, they provide a lot of help, and I think it's the association the most acknowledged in the camp. The best.

What makes it the best?

Well because it is reputed in the whole camp. Maybe it doesn't have a big reputation outside of the camp, but inside the camp, everybody knows it. Everyone knows about it. It provides such help that all the people know about it and praise it. (Nada, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

This exchange of services for political support or reconnaissance constitutes one of the defining elements of political clientelism or patronage. Auyero and al have shown how, beyond initial reticence, patronage and social movements can be related (Auyero, Lapegna, and Poma 2009). As NGOs are unavoidable intermediaries for the access to resources otherwise inaccessible not only in material terms, but also of access to other actors and the public space, their relation to beneficiaries is associated with that of a patron with its clients. They are associated with another element of a machine contributing to the alienation of the Palestinian camp dwellers. Such descriptions of patronage are often marked by normative implications (Bonnet 2010). Harold Gosnell for example describes clientelism as follows: "The term 'political machine' is used to convey an unfavourable impression regarding a given party organization", and further attempts to develop methods to combat such organisation (Gosnell 1933). As such, machine politics and clientelism are generally associated with "old fashioned politics" deemed to disappear through modernisation, despite their continuous presence in most political systems and capacity to adapt to modernisation and reform (Briquet 1995, 1998; Mattina 2007; Wolfinger 1972).

Ethnographic descriptions of the phenomenon have paid more attention to clientelism as a form of political relation, displacing the question from how clientelism can be criticised to how clientelism works. Robert Gay argues that patronage is not opposed to ideology or civicness, and more importantly that it has been to an extent used by the urban poor as a resource: “[P]olitical clienteles are less likely to assume the form of loose clusters of independently negotiated dyads than organizations, communities or even whole regions that fashion relationships or reach understandings with politicians, public officials and administrations” (1998). This relativisation of clientelism is even more visible when its actors are extended beyond the boundaries of the state, such as with the competition of philanthropists in Rio’s *favelas* including actors such as the churches and organised crime: “All these actors of good-doing intervene in restricted geographical spaces, where they have to compete with one another in their attempts to create exclusive links with their potential patrons. Yet, these poor neighbourhoods’ population answers with the opposite strategy, which consists in refusing to choose and diversifying possible sources of relief” (Goirand 1999). It would similarly be exaggerated to strictly associate the relation between these inhabitants and the organisations to unilateral domination. Instead, the organisations appear to be working in relation with more or less extended networks of clients, which in return work in securing support from more or less extended networks of organisations, whether these are NGOs, partisan groups, campaigns, religious organisations, and so on.

Indeed the NGOs relied partly on being locally reputable as providers of services in the camps, which gave them political authority. The relation was both anchored in a discourse of legitimacy established through the notion of “doing something good for the camps”, and a form of practical interaction to the organisation in which the provision of a service remains essential. If the project logic described by Jad (2007) remains a reality of their functioning, the next par shows how this project logic is inscribed in continuities which engage the activists. Logics of NGOization only take meaning when contextualised (Beinin and Vairel 2011b). The development of NGOs shows the existence of a multiplicity of stories which saw the institutionalisation of specific groups in specific forms according to social constraints.

II. Defining the identity of groups through activists' interaction

To apprehend the NGO sector comprehensively it is necessary to take a closer look at the forms of engagement in these organisations. Before existing as legal structures, through their actions, or in relation to other collective actors, the studied organisations existed as groups of actors in relation with one another.

The effects of the associational form on processes of politicisation and mobilisation have often been deduced or implied from broad, macroscopic perspectives (Putnam 2000). Contrarily to that perspective, several proposals have been made to study these processes from a microscopic perspective, focusing on the processes of interaction within organisations and focusing on the relationship between the structuration of these processes of interaction and the emergence, or non-emergence, of processes of politicisation (Aldrin 2012). Their results have particularly led to a demonstration that, instead of being either favourable or unfavourable contexts for politicisation, associations should be treated as the contexts of specific forms of politicisation (Eliasoph 1997, 1998, Hamidi 2003, 2006). In this part, I will rely on this literature to focus on the relation between the composition of organisations, their recruitment strategies, their structuration as places of interaction, and the development of collective frames within them.

A. Partisan activism and technical brokers, from a grammar to the other

In this section I look more closely at the question of framing, linking broad structural transformations and sociability and socialisation in the organisations. For Daniel Cefaï and Claudette Lafaye, indeed, a lot of what makes a social movement “is inscribed in the circuit of relations between active members (...) enlarged to good wills or during daily interactions: casual conversations, phone calls, diffusion of syntheses, work reunions” (2001). Following Alexandra Plows I try to “trace real-time development of social mobilisation as it emerges (...), how publics are framing issues *in their own terms*” (2008). In her take on the question Eliasoph similarly values “asking what members assume ‘being a member’ requires; what kinds of talk and silence members consider appropriate for that context; whether talk is considered important at all or whether there is another, more non-verbal way of establishing a sense of companionship” (1998:21). More than the classical framing approach focusing on leaders’ strategies (Snow et al. 1986, 1980), these proposals focus on the type of relations between members, and the effect it has on their apprehension of new social roles, as explained by Fillieule (2009). The importance of social networks will be highlighted here, as well as the capacity for actors to inscribe themselves in an organisation. These networks, representations, and capacities are, always situated in the local relations of power and meanings (Beinin and Vairel 2011a).

The professionalization of NGOs, explains Rémi Lefèvre, does not depend on a transformation of their ideology, but on “the progressive and contested implementation of specific practices” (2007). The adaptation of the NGOs to changing conditions led to drastic changes in their definition. I will try to show how a similar change occurred in the Palestinian NGOs in the years preceding the fieldwork. In the first weeks of fieldwork, I could observe an apparent division between the younger and older generations of activists in the NGOs. While the former presented a discourse centred on professionalisation and the answer to technical need, the latter tended to recount a period when engagement in NGOs was a continuation of the Palestinian struggle, as described earlier. But the young/old divide failed to entirely make sense of what was being observed, as revealed by looking at specific activists with “atypical” profiles. Instead, I propose looking at the rise in importance of the group of the “technical brokers” within the organisations, through these organisations’ pragmatic adaptation to a changing context.

From partisan activists to technical brokers

Technicisation and professionalisation were not new in the organisations. Khalila referred to her joining the organisation in a register very close to what could be heard from the mouth of much younger activists:

I did not grow up in the camps, but I had the chance to go there and to go there often, it makes me always... closer to Palestine. Going to the camp is always like going a little bit to Palestine really. It is nurturing.

Do you mean because of the placards, the tags...?

Yes and also the people! The people are very close, they stick together, because they have nothing. (Khalila, Beirut, February 2015)

As described earlier the image of a period dominated by partisan engagements must be relativised. The “older” activists were not only partisans or former partisans. This impression of a limitation concerning a hypothetical generational chasm was reinforced by the mobilisation by younger activists of representations associated with the partisan grammar of engagement, putting forward the importance of the Second Intifada in particular as a central moment for their engagement.

The rise in importance within these organisations of a group of already-present *technical brokers* can be explained by changes in the structure of funding. As the fundraisers presented by Lefevre (2007), this group managed to gain legitimacy mostly through its capacity to obtain results, namely international funding. The same argument is made by Bianchi, who insists on the phenomenon of professionalisation which impacts the world of NGOs in the 1990s, especially due to the change of forms of funding for these NGOs (2013). Because of these transformations in funding, specific competences and resources appeared as essential for the functioning of the organisations. Large-scale changes in the structure of funding led in certain NGOs to changes within the organisations of the importance of the different groups, but also of forms of recruitment and trajectories to join these groups.

Micro-mobilisations and the change of collective frames

With the technical brokers' gain of importance in the organisations, the transformation can be seen as a succession of pragmatic evaluations at the core of which we find a transformation of the conditions of funding for NGOs. The adoption of the associational grammar appears as accompanying individual strategies of professionalisation and a collective redirection of action primarily motivated by practical reasons. As Hala Abou-Zaki puts it, Palestinian camps are spaces in which we can observe, on a small scale, the 'effects' of actors in power on everyday practices and discourses" (2013). This period, which corresponds with the rise in importance of the technical brokers in the organisations due to their ability to face the requirements of the new providers of funding, is one of learning for the organisations. As with Lefevre's fundraisers, the rise in importance and the development of the careers of technical brokers has had considerable impact on the way NGOs frame their action and present it, not only to fit the requirements of funding, but also via specific representations due to a certain socialisation (2007).

The transformation of collective frames described here could be perceived as an effect of a transforming structure of opportunities. Nevertheless, we must consider the remarks made to the notion that "the political opportunity structure here depends less on objective facts than on actors' perceptions that chances of successful actions are opening up. Admittedly, the properties of specific events may be expected to affect actors' interpretations of the available opportunities. Nevertheless, the easier it is to associate specific events with broader cultural frames, the greater will be the impact of those events" (Diani 1996). What has to be looked into, beyond the mere change of the structure of funding, is the way technical brokers manage to impose their understanding of what works to other groups which have been trained and socialised differently.

These changes in vocabularies and framings were not entirely unconsciously affecting the technical brokers. They could be presented as strategies in order to bypass a situation in which direct politicisation would have led either to illegitimacy or to censorship from the explicitly political actors, such as the Palestinian factions, PCs, the Palestinian refugees themselves, or the Lebanese state:

We meet the community and the stakeholders' decision, and do what they want. If you ask me, I say, I don't want to see these water tanks in the streets in the camps, this is what I'd like to do but it's not my decision. It's a community decision, all the stakeholders come together and say we want to do this and then I will do. And the background of this is to improve the governance in the camps. Our goal is not doing the electricity or the water. This is the means of doing a good governance in the camps. We are helping the governance. We are not in our work, it's not to solve the issue of electricity, the issue of electricity when we work this is a mean to improve the governance in the camps, and stability of course. (Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014)

NGOs are traversed by oppositions and micromobilisations between the different groups composing them. Looking at the recruitment practices and existing divisions of these organisations, the emergence of the associational grammar and of the discourse of depoliticisation is not linked to the unilateral inculcation of a neoliberal ideology, but instead is the result of these relations.

B. The role of micro-spaces, constructing groups through place investment

Beyond logics of recruitment, we can look at the forms of interactions which mark the organisations as places of themselves: “for a long time associations have remained ‘black boxes’, in which we assumed the existence of a number of processes – learning of democratic principles, development of specific and generalised relations of confidence toward others and institutions, inculcation of an appetite for public debate based on principles of discursive rationality, or even political socialisation – without really investigating these” (Hamidi 2006). The actors' dispositions, just as the institutional context of associations, are not negated, but we should look at the concrete conditions of their expression, by focusing on situated interaction. NGOs are not only institutions but a succession of places in which people are in copresence, a copresence which has to be maintained over a long time and daily. Looking at activism through the presence in places will be another way to look at how collective representations are produced.

Friends, colleagues, and comrades: building collective identity in places of activism

Most interviewees were, on a daily basis, physically present at the same place. Going to the offices, meetings, cafés, and the public space of the camps itself, and being visited in these places, marked a spatialised routine in which being a NGO activist was being constructed. As we have seen with questions of recruitment, the political or ideological dimension to the action of NGOs was rarely the register through which people interacted with them. If we are looking at the work of building collective frames, we have to look at what happened in the daily life of organisations, and foremost, in what putting together essentially diverse actors meant to the vanishing of the political:

We are in Najdeh's Cash for Work's office in Shatila with Tariq and two other members, Yusuf and Nabil. As usual in the morning the office is not very active, the occasional passage of people enquiring about the possibility to join the program has been rare today. Tariq and his colleagues have set their seats behind the desk tables and are waiting for the time to go out in the streets with the other members and the wheeled bins. I sit in front of them in my usual position. Yusuf, sitting at the laptop, shows music videos to the others. Tariq and him both arrived from Syria these last months, and are engaged in a discussion about the singer whose video they are watching, who disappeared after returning to Syria recently. Tariq takes the occasion of my presence to tell me that story and ask me about the situation of asylum in France, asking if it is harder to go there than in Germany. Nabil is not from Syria but from Shatila itself, and contrarily to Tariq and Yusuf, keeps good relations with most of the camp's political leader, having been engaged at a time in a party. He comments on the music, eludes the evocation of Syria and of the civil war, they light another cigarette, the conversation stops for a while. It starts again as another member, closer to Najdeh's cadres, shows up asking "How you young guys are doing", quickly switching to pleasantries and jokes about the messiness of the camp and anecdotes about work and their rounds in the camp. Shortly after, the members arrive, and the discussion changes to another tone: Tariq and Yusuf check people's names and write them down, inviting them to sign their presence. Nabil on his side continues chatting casually with most arriving people, some of whom like him are older residents of the camp. (FD, March 2016)

In the hour-long succession of events taking place in the NGO's office, most of the interaction relied at some level on the political situations of the described people. For Tariq and Yusuf, evoking Syria, just as for Tariq to ask me, as a European and supposedly a person capable of obtaining him either information or help to travel to Europe, and later on through the joking evocation of the camp's state and the progress of the work. Each of these topics – and a number of other events which are missed in the a posteriori writing down of the sequence in a research diary – constituted occasions for the elaboration of a general discourse on the injustice of the situation of refugees, which the project is officially trying to alleviate. This is especially the case as each participant, taken separately, had the social skills to lead such a conversation. The constant presence of potentially-politicised topics only led to what Nina Eliasoph calls *political evaporation*: “The people I met did sound as if they cared about politics, but only in some contexts and not others. They did not just think everything was fine as it was, but there were too few contexts in which they could openly discuss their discontent” (Eliasoph 1998). Individually, each of the three members present had clearly talked about these issues politically. Tariq's jokes about the camp took a very different content when in an interview situation, for example:

You know today we are doing something for the garbage, it will make, I mean, the camp will improve with that. Now maybe I have some day money for, I don't know, something like trees, to improve, or if I have, like here, a space, like we have a space here. Now maybe I can arrange that space, I don't even know, for children or... it depends on what people need, of course! But maybe, since the camp, you have seen it, the wires are bad, the water... like the building, me my building is almost collapse! So I can do something. It's important for the... for, I mean, for life, no? (Tariq, Shatila, February 2016)

Tariq evokes the broader implications of his work or of the fact that it can be considered as an answer to an unfair situation. In other contexts he voices it in such a way very easily, putting in relation the marginalisation of the camp and the impossibility for Palestinian refugees to buy items like fresh bananas or meat to the racism of the Lebanese society and its willingness to marginalise the camps and those living in them, especially Palestinian and Syrian refugees. As Eliasoph with her American volunteers, “citizens come to define some issues, and some contexts, as ‘political’ and some as ‘not political’, in interaction” (1998:15). It was as if the very high political competence displayed by the actors in certain contexts vanished in others.

The very setting had such effects due to the forms of sociability at play. For Tariq, this was also a group of friends in what was, after his departure from Syria, a rather isolated situation. Tariq had moved, because of his reputation, from being “one of the guys” to being in charge of the group, which he handled with caution:

It is very hard, that’s my big problem, because I am the boss, before I was just one of them. Now I’m like the boss-friend. But they need to get to work, and I need to get them to work.
(Tariq, Shatila, February 2016)

This permanent and quiet interaction among activists, marked by the necessity to take one’s place in a group constantly in copresence, was essential in the construction of collective frames.

Sticking together: silence and the implicit

The associations appear from the outside as coherent groups working in favour of a set project, this was far less self-evident from the inside. From up close we can see the differences of perception of the associations’ action by the different groups and individuals composing them. These actors’ copresence in specific spaces, the organisations’ offices, was therefore essential. I was expecting to find in these places the sort of “free spaces” (Evans and Boyte 1992) or “safe spaces” (Tilly 2000), and the sort of discreet political discourses social movement scholars tend to pay attention to. In securing “backstage” contexts, isolated from the constraining public space of the camps, I expected the “actual” representations, which transpired in interviews, to emerge. This ignored the forms of sociability at play: “Depending on what meanings are attached to actual or perceived ties, dense and isolated networks are as likely to impede protest or limit it to purely local targets and identities as to facilitate” (Polletta 1999). The rules of interaction matter as much as the relative “safety” of the stage.

For Tariq, Yusuf, and Nabil's experience the Cash for Work initiative was not a project which had a clear-cut beginning and end, but a long term engagement in which relation with each other had to be maintained. Maintaining at the same time the sort of sociability required for the organisation to work, while avoiding any expression which could cause dispute or be an occasion to show that the content of the project was based on divisive, generalised, and in last resort political consideration was an essential part of their *face work* (Goffman 1982) in the group.

In this part I have been exploring the question of collective framings in the studied organisations. I have proposed considering the question through an interactionist perspective. Political evaporation did not come from the lack of ideas, but from the context of interaction itself. Referring to the NGOs as spaces of interaction between actors whose trajectories of engagements, relations to the group, experience and resources vary deeply allows seeing framing operations as they unfold. Rather than an active importation of it, it seems to work as the least conflictive and divisive way of framing the group's action and identity. The associational grammar works as a collective frame in the Goffmanian sense: a general set of rules to interpret what happens and what the members think is expected of them in situation (Goffman 1974). The transformation from partisan to associational references has not occurred following ideological inner debates in the organisations. Rather, it is taking place through the avoidance of the political which marks the functioning of the organisations and relies on a focus on "what works", giving a particular place to the *technical brokers*.

The NGOs must also be seen as geographical places. Rather than "safe spaces", they appear as one of many stages, in which maintaining the group prevails over politicising issues. Focusing on the tasks at hand, refraining from naming certain issues and remarks, or diverting them as jokes, not taking into account the wider implications, or ostentatiously not taking them too seriously, was part of the necessary *face work* keeping the groups united. Political apathy was part of a collective work. "Depoliticisation" was the result of pragmatic operations of adaptation to context.

III. Framing respectability and autochthony, between local reputation and technical resources

Appointment with the PYN in Mar Elias. Taha has no time to talk to me and suggests I take the opportunity to discuss with his colleague Yazid, who has a similar function to his. Yazid lived in Ain el-Hilweh, but moved to Beirut for his studies at the university, and then his work. For him, engagement started during the siege of Nahr el-Barid and the 2009 War in Gaza. He evokes his studies, his communist engagements, and the situation of international emergency as causes of an engagement organised around the question of civil rights, fighting against anti-Palestinian racism in Lebanon. For him the Lebanese right wing is to blame for this racism. (...) Participating in the creation of the PYN, Yazid explains to me that the creation of the network took six months, during which Mansour and Pursue were heavily involved in monetary terms but also through a report funded by the EU. The constitution of the PYN came from ideas by “The guys, [who] have a good idea of the society they live in.” This report made the local focus of the organisation emerge. The problem, says Yazid, is that the camps are managed by corrupted PCs, which remain close and incompetent, but a lack of hope in the camps themselves: “The camp, it’s a space of, like, naked space. It’s unable for you to manage yourself. You can’t do it. [I ask him if he talks of life, of political mobilisation, of politics]. Yes, political life. Or you are outside the rule.” (FD, March 2015)

At first sight, something clashes between Yazid’s highly politicised expression in the interview and his NGO engagement. For an unacculturated outsider such as myself, there was something surprising to having a former communist, camp-born, college-educated, and engaged in anti-racist struggles, getting to worry about the creation of day care centres, painting of streets, bundling of electrical cables, and arguments over potable water or street floods. His description of tiredness and exhaustion is as much a description of his own feelings as a proposal of explanation rather than a testimony. In stable employment and living out of the camp, Yazid was describing the perspective of other people in the camps, and linking it to the evolution in his own engagement, to the fact that as the other core members of the PYN he considered having “a good idea of the society [he] lived in”. The experience Yazid had of the camps, associated with the use of methods and modes of valuations he trusted in, gave him the feeling of being legitimately able to talk about the needs of the camps and to act accordingly.

Feeling that one can legitimately talk in the camps' name demands certain social resources. I will discuss the notion of social resources and discuss how both organisations and individual activists work on the emergence of a specific type of localised resource, autochthony. These actors employ resources in their *face work*; “the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face” (Goffman 1982:12). Therefore the use of social resources in interaction will be linked to the grammars of interactions described in Chapter 1.

A. Localising resources

A part of the resource mobilisation theory “examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements” (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The school tends to focus on the objective attributes which lead individual actors to participate in collective action. The question of resources originates from this first remark, and includes the totality of relations, networks, organisations, and other social attributes effectively employed and engaged in an organisation to obtain mobilisation of its members, acquire new members, and organise its mobilisation in regard to what they effectively consist of. Anthony Oberschall, notably, establishes a connexion between the two sorts of organisational dimensions composing a social movement organisation, its internal coherence and its integration in the political system (1973). The main interest of this approach is to include the entire field in the scope of social sciences: “The weight of a group in a social movement depends on a capital of means, of *resources*” (Neveu 2005:56).

To apprehend the question raised in introduction, I propose to consider the implications of the concept of resource mobilisations in regard to the question of space. A number of proposals have been made in that direction by geographers, most notably by Byron Miller (2000). I will quickly present the limits of the classical approaches in resource mobilisation and the argument presented to correct, contradict, or develop this approach. After which, I will propose an adaptation of that approach to the grammatical model presented earlier.

Resources and context

One of the weaknesses of classical resource mobilisation theory, drawing from its ambition to de-psychologise the analysis, is its context-ignoring and objectivist biases (Lapeyronnie 1988). Miller argues that this model goes with an overly-abstract perception of who actors and resources are by situating itself in the theory of the rational choice. A geographical critique allows proposing a more precise acceptance of the concept: “the rational actor has too long been considered an isolated, social automaton with no gender, class, or ethnic understanding of his or her identity” (2000:20). It is possible to maintain an interest for social resources not as external realities, but as drawing value from situated rationalities. Social movement organisations do not merely maintain relations with one another through an ideational context, but also a material one, and can be apprehended through their copresence with other actors they have to make do with, as is insisted on by Grojean (Grojean 2008).

This also implies clarifying what exactly is meant by “resources”. In their classic article on the concept, Mayer Zald and John McCarthy define resources as “time and money which can be easily reallocated” (1977), and Doug McAdam notes that later uses have extended the notion increasingly (1982). In these approaches “Resources are proper to actors, intangible and fungible things, tools at the disposal of a domination or political action and constituting their stake” (Lapeyronnie 1988). On the contrary, works putting the question of the actors’ dispositions in context through space and time tend to show to what extent resources cannot be apprehended as “transparent” and “neutral” social “things” but as social relations in space and place (McAdam 1982; Tilly 2010). This allows explaining “improbable” mobilisations led by resource-deprived groups (Mathieu 1999; Hmed 2007; Collovald and Mathieu 2009; Martinache 2013).

The market analogy fails on this point: “One must be aware of the fact that, contrarily to an economic capital which exists separately from those who hold it, (...) these knowledge and know-hows are hardily distinguishable from the agents” (Mathieu 2012). A relational and comprehensive notion of resources associates them not to external goods which always have the same value, but to social characteristics in a certain context. The connection with spatial assemblages has been made by several authors through the reference to a production of *indigenous resources*, in other words resources available and valuable only in a specific local

context (McAdam 1982:43–44). These resources appear in McAdam’s work to be mostly elements of organisation, such as leaders, members, networks of incentive, and communication. His reinterpretation defines resources mainly as relations: far from the objective stuff implied by the market analogy. McAdam’s model is nonetheless little more, in the end, than a contextualisation of a structural position, which does not fundamentally diverge from the classical approach: in the end, his definition of indigenous resources remains indifferent to the locality of said resources, and the elements he retains continue to lie in the placeless to an extent.

Grammars and resources

An answer to these limits consists in contextualising the model (Hmed 2008, 2009; Miller 2000; Zhao 1998), to consider how resources are given a particular value in a particular space, or how space itself is turned into a resource for mobilisation. The implication of this proposal is best resumed by Jean-Louis Briquet and Frédéric Sawicki, for whom the interest is to consider how resources are defined through the structuration at a local scale (1989). Indigenous resources are not only defined as resources owned by the “indigenous”, but as resources indigenous to a locale in particular, which make sense in their context. Their respective “values” and importance cannot be assessed *a priori*, but only in the course of an action: neither money, time, fame, networks of communication, nor any other attribute associated with resources can be assessed without it being effectively actualised in an interaction and subjected to evaluation, test, and critique by the actors in regard to the framing operations they are undertaking.

In the proposed grammatical model I have proposed that each of the three alternative grammars I described was attached to specific, relevant, resources. With a pragmatic approach, I want to look at resources as they are put at test in interaction. This idea echoes with Byron Miller’s remarks on “‘proper’ place-based behaviour” (2000:24) or with Stéphanie Dechezelles’ insistence on the capacity to engage “correctly” with local practices (2012). There is therefore something of a locally-coherent presentation of the self, which makes the competency locally legitimate. Jean-Noël Retière discusses the way in which autochthony is a specific resource produced in reference to such a local “market” (2003). As a resource,

autochthony has to do with a form of social labour. It is not mechanically obtained but associated with individual and collective work, it is not valued in itself but in relation, and more importantly, those who detain it are qualified in imposing their understanding of collective memory and local meanings to the others.

Therefore we are interrogating the operations undertaken by the actors to make acceptable social attributes in a context. In their study of the relation between “the local” and “the national”, Philippe Corcuff and Claudette Lafaye describe this mechanism as “translation” (1989), to show the logics of transformation and adaptation undertaken by cognitive resources when entering a new context. Besides, in the same way as externally-acquired resources can be translated into local forms to be efficient, sites are also the place of production of specific resources which do not depend on external phenomena to be constructed. We can look at how the collective and individual experiences acquired by actors on a variety of sites, both internal and external to the camps, are actualised in the process of this interaction. In this approach autochthony is a specific form of “capital”³², attached to place, and which draws on other resources. More importantly perhaps, Ripoll insists that associating autochthony to a capital “allows highlighting that one always needs a (social) work, more or less voluntary and important, to realise this operation of resource importation and more importantly accumulation, whether they are new or old, because this activity is always an activity of production” (2010). This definition echoes with several other perspectives on autochthony, which always appears as the result of social activities, rather than a mere naturalised attribute attached to a person (Fol 2010; Mazaud 2010; Renahy 2010). This in return implies that autochthony can be mobilised differently by different fractions of social groups. What is especially notable, as explained by Sylvie Tissot, is how autochthony is also used as a form of distinction among members of a same social class (2010).

³² Retière calls autochthony a “popular social capital” in reference to Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of the term, but does not develop further.

B. Local resources, “good reputation”, and claiming legitimacy

The capacity to play both on the register of scientific competence and local belonging was essential in the observed organisations. These two registers were not the only ones existing or legitimate in the camps. They rather corresponded to the framings the organisations such as Najdeh, the PYN, or other engaged NGOs would generally mobilise when engaging with political topics in public. Anecdotes on such person or other being “truly local” were common, as described further down. My aim here is not as much to establish a complete inventory of the types of resources employed in the camps, as it is to return on two particularly structuring sets of resources, and their relation to space. I will then show the importance of this localisation of resources in the establishment of the organisations as legitimate representatives in public space, in spite of their claim of depoliticisation.

Claiming and producing autochthony as a resource

Determining legitimate users of the camps implied determining the illegitimate ones. The fear, regularly evoked, of seeing the camps fill with non-Palestinian and non-Arab inhabitants, was part of this process. Beyond the collective marking of a Palestinian identity and memory in the camp, the activity of individuals to delimit their own local anchoring to it contributed to the sense of community and collective identity of the area. The capacity to claim belonging to a place as a source of legitimacy, to successfully claim autochthony, has tended to be situated and looked at in a genealogical perspective: “Over time, through a genealogical mechanism, the ‘people of power’ gradually drift away from their foundational core and pass from the universe of power to that of the land” (Hilgers 2011). But autochthony does not only draw from time: “even though the arguments that groups make are of demographic nature, the use of autochthony to back a group’s legitimacy hides motives that are in fact more closely related to the history of a collectivity’s development rather than to the order of migrations. (...) The distinction between autochthon and allochthon participates in the creation of a mode of identification that allows people to distinguish, categorise, and evaluate each resident of an urban area” (Hilgers 2011). Autochthony works “as a resource acquired locally through interactions: “autochthony [has] to be thought as a social relationship built with time, requiring devices, forged and consolidated by discourses but which, in no

case, must be reduced to the objective quality of residential seniority or to the fact to be native from the place” (Retière 2003).

Being rooted in or having a relation with the camp was one of the motivations of engagement for the informants. This explained the centrality of adventitious activities for certain activists. Socialisation through these activities, as well as early forms of engagement in associations, support clubs, and some forms of partisan politics, was associated with the figure of “son/daughter of the camp”. Taha’s first contacts with political activism, during the 2000 mobilisations around the Intifada, reflect this dimension:

If there were so many people in the streets, why did they choose you?

Because they knew, because I was... [long pause] I was doing everything you know! Not just in the demonstration, plus to shout in the street, I’m a poet also, I was saying poems in the streets, plus... [pause] I’m a friend of most the people inside the camp, and the guys were all saying oh Taha is coming and Taha is... and from that they began to hear my name. And also they know me because I was... [long pause, he sighs, and giggles] I was, between two practice, a smart student, and also the number one in my class, and... not naughty, the, you know *mušāḡib* [turbulent]? I don’t know. All of those, so they saw me, they called me, and we had a meeting and then it’s okay. (...) Then, in Baddawi, I started to compose a music band. In the Intifada we did so many festivals, we made even a CD, I will bring it for you, I have it somewhere. So I started to work with the band and began to make festivals, in all of Lebanon, all of the camps, and most of the people... not all of the people... let’s say they... began to have good relations with people in all of the camps. Plus, I was a football player [he chuckles], a good football player, having my team in Baddawi, and now I’m the manager of my team in Baddawi, and having relations with people in different camps... because of all of this! (Taha, Mar Elias, March 2015)

Taha’s story is typical of a certain group of informants who had been described or described themselves as “sons of the camps”, a term used in informal exchanges to claim one’s local rootedness, on which I return in Chapter 3. “Good morality”, in that sense, was specifically local, linking origin, work, engagement, and adventitious activities. Contributing to the good society of the camps was a way of demonstrating one’s own engagement with place, which in return contributed to forms of moral recognition only valid in said place. This also transpired in the type of interactions activists had with camp dwellers in public space. Taha, as well as

other activists, would step out of his way regularly to greet people or small groups of people, families on the step of their doors, specific shop owners, etc. When walking out of the Markaz al-Naqab's office in Burj al-Barajneh with one of the founders, we met local members of the PYN, who stopped us and explained emphatically how my accompanier was a reputable man. These praises should not be taken out of context. The fact that the same NGOs the praised actors were members of were in charge of providing relief and occasionally public services to the camps, and, especially in front of an outsider, thanking one for one's good help contributed to the symbolic exchange characterising relations of patronage and service-giving. They still show these actors' capacity to construct themselves as good representatives of the camps, if only because people feel obliged to confirm that line.

As such autochthony is the result of an activity of place-work, "the interactional process whereby individuals negotiate the definition of a particular place" (Hochschild 2010). Being considered as "sons of the camps" was linked to activities and engagements in the camps' moral economy. Not everyone born in the camps was able to efficiently claim autochthony, and conversely some "sons of the camps" were not in them since very long. I will rely on two examples situated around Najdeh to illustrate that point. At first, this was the case of Bassam, a Palestinian refugee from Syria who had arrived in Burj al-Barajneh from Syria a few months previously. In the early years of the arrival of Syrian refugees in the camps their isolation was felt harshly, in particular because of the lack of access to resources. As a group, according to Bassam in particular, the Syrian refugees and Palestinians from Syria were atomised, giving an opportunity for a number of already-resource-rich actors to assume the role of brokers with relief organisations, leaders, people of influence, and external researchers and journalists. Despite not having been engaged with the Palestinian community of Syria prior to his migration, Bassam contributed to the development of the group:

Every day I go, from 9am to 11:30 in the evening, to visit people, to go to the hospitals, to go to, this person who is very sick, to do a meeting with a political organisation, and so on and so forth.

But why does it have to be you?

I think [he pauses] in all the world, in every community in the world, some people are sufficient, and some others are... persons. Merely names. You see? And I'm not the only one, we are about four. The committee is about forty, but we are about four. Now two of them are working with the PC, registering the immigrants, now another two are now also in the Haifa hospital. (...) In Syria I was participating to a magazine, in English. I was also a teacher. I was also manager of a private school. My time was taken, but the profits were very good. I used to live a good life, with a big house, big car, good family, I used to live in the suburbs of Damascus. (...) What is strange even for me, I've been six months here, ask wherever you go, they'll know about me. I'm not Superman, but I try to go to the hospital, clinic, to visit you at home, I seize any opportunity to meet people's organisations, to make demonstrations... maybe this makes me a well-known person here in Burj al-Barajneh in a very short time. And what's more important, I've always tried to make the distance between me and the Palestinian organisations the same. You see? With Fateh, with Hamas, with Intifada, with the Democratic Front, with... to be just one man. Ask anyone, and they will say this person is neutral. (Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, March 2015)

Contrarily to Bassam, Tariq did not benefit from pre-existing resources to allow him to engage in the camps. But his successive professional positions had given him the occasion to inscribe himself in Shatila:

Me I worked in Verdun, Shawarmanji first, because I was a chef, and then to Hamra also a chef, for cooking. Then in Shatila I was in the shop, you know, the sandwich shop I took you to and bought you today, next to Ahlam Laji. Now I work for a while there and then in a small supermarket I was [he mimics operating a cashier] I was cashier for there. Yes.

And then Najdeh?

And then Najdeh. Because I know Najdeh, I am a Syrian and they are helping us so much. So I go to Najdeh and receive a little help maybe. And one day there was this project and they asked for me work with them. I was not coordinator, just one of the guys. It's after they asked for me to be coordinator, at first I just work this project. After you know what happened with [the former, non-Arabic speaking coordinator], so they asked if I can do the coordinator and I said yes. (...)

You say you know that many people and you're doing also visits, it is people you knew already in Syria?

No there was not so many from Homs, maybe just four or five. People I mean. But it's mostly people, they come from Damascus, you know Yarmouk, or from Aleppo also. At first I knew them because we were Syrians and, we were doing little... things you know. And there was even people I never knew! Before Najdeh I mean. For instance, Wissam, I never knew him. The same with Jamal here, but it's not the same for him because he's Palestinian-Lebanese, not Palestinian-Syrian. But you've seen that I get to know people a lot, I mean, you've seen in the street, and also it's because, let me tell you something, it's also because of my work here, I mean I do a lot for the people. When I'm working in the supermarket, okay, it was before the card project so people I could write for them a paper saying you need this and this and they will buy it for you. Now we have the card project. But at that time I could help also. Let's say you come for shopping, and you get a payment for maybe 20500 Lebanese, okay? I tell you don't give me 500. It helps. It's not so much 500, but at the end of the month, maybe it can help. So people will think that Tariq, you know, he's a good man, he does good things, so when we come with Najdeh after that, saying we have a project for such and such, they will know that I'm wanting to good things for them, and that Najdeh also wants to do good things for them. (Tariq, Shatila, February 2016)

These two examples give two different accounts of place-work, as the successful translation of extraneous resources or the production of local ones. Adventitious activities are once again essential: the described acts of "benevolence" all contributed to their legitimacy in other worlds and sectors of activity. If Bassam or Taha were listened to in public encounter regarding the state of the urban services, it was not only because of their presence in organisations working on these topics, but also because, having participated in a number of apparently-unrelated activities, they were all the more acknowledged. As such autochthony is an essential local resource if we want to understand the emergence of local mobilisations. At the centre of the organisations' discourses was the claim to represent the actual people of the camp.

Opposite to this phenomenon, other interactions relied on the technical capacity of the actors. While autochthony can be perceived as a resource produced in space and through a relation to space, this second type of resources was, essentially, produced externally and translated in local terms. I have already insisted on the importance of engagement as a mean of being in relation to Palestinian spaces in the experience of the technical brokers: for this category of actors, legitimising their presence in the camps.

“Doing good for the camp”: the politics of local reputation

The two registers of locality and technicality were generally associated by the same organisation. The various activities involved in either the production or translation of resources and the emergence of a specific, local, resource, which I have called autochthony, mattered in the organisations’ place-work. Mathieu has shown how social resources were understandable as adaptation to a well-understood context (2002). We must interrogate the relation between place-work and the actors’ engagement in relation to the public space of the camps and their population. Both at the individual and group level autochthony was a resource the organisations employed to legitimise themselves as representatives in the camps. This legitimacy was instituted by playing on the two domains of the associational and the familiar, to make participation to the organisations acceptable.

The logic of autochthony was particularly efficient as it managed to bring into mobilisation actors mostly wary of political debates and engagement in general. Being considered as “local benevolent actors” and “people doing good for the camp” played a role for the organisations’ relation with such actors. By “investing” in the camp, and appearing as “doing good for it”, they managed to present themselves as legitimate local representatives, and therefore manage to engage with the public. For the organisations, the choice to rely heavily on what I have called associational and familiar grammars, while being linked to the recruitment of and social experiences of members, was also described as, at least partly, a strategic decision by the executive director of Najdeh:

People are much more focusing on their daily life, and daily condition. This is what people need to focus on in order to come over their difficulties and come back to be involved in the national actions. (...) So tackling this from a different perspective, and considering this sort of things political actions or not, this is the difference I think between the perspectives of people. (Layla, director of Najdeh, Beirut, April 2015)

The same effect of place-work could be seen in the discourse of recently-recruited members. Ahmed, a newcomer whom I met through the PYN’s debates, described the importance of local good reputation in his own recruitment:

Did you know Fadi before you started to work for Ahlam Laji'?

Yes even if it was not a very strong, close relation. I knew because he is very, people talk about him and say good things. When they offered me the job I heard many good things, people told me he's a good man, he does good things for the people. And also in other place, always they said Fadi he's a good man.

Why does he have such a good reputation?

Even in the street, also because he is in many places, many foundations, so people in the camp know him. He's in Ahlam Laji', also he is in Pursue, and in other as well, so people see him, they see what he does is good. (Ahmed, Shatila, March 2015)

Reputation was in this case central to the decision to accept the offer to work for Fadi's association. Being acknowledged as "a good man" was necessary for Fadi to approach potential new employees and, as it happened in Ahmed's case, members. In the following weeks, Ahmed entered increasingly inwards in the organisation, becoming one of the activists to participate in the PYN campaigns. Even though Fadi made little secret about his relations to the PCs, the way his group had employed to approach newcomers such as Ahmed had not been to rely on an open denunciation, but on autochthony. Similar cases could be observed in Najdeh, regarding which a newly arrived activist having just been to a demonstration made a very similar testimony:

Najdeh's reputation is good. [Pause, hesitation] I was not looking for a position only in Najdeh I was looking for a position in any organisation. And Najdeh is very liked. And that's it.

What is a good reputation?

They had a good way of working with people even before I came. [Pause] You can enter any organisation which will work with you, in a much worse way. (Jamila and Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

Reputational dynamics are essential in the definition of community, leaving a particular place to gossip and rumours (Elias 1994). As Philippe Aldrin described, they can also be a way to tackle politics in an almost surreptitious manner, avoiding the emergence of conflicts (2005).

The ways gossip worked in the field can be observed via the relation between members and other people outside of the organisations. In March 2015 I was invited to join two young activists of the PYN, Nada and Yassir, recently but increasingly engaged in the movement. I joined them in one of the basketball fields which can be found close to the camp. As Yassir explained, spending time in the camp offered only moderate amusement, especially when it came to being in open space, a scarce good in Shatila, and enjoying outdoorsy occupations, which was complicated in the overcrowded streets. Therefore he and his friends preferred heading out of the camp in the weekends when they could go to the basketball field, the nearby park or, as we did later that afternoon, for a walk toward Beirut's Corniche to enjoy the sea front. These moments, as well as going to the university, in Tariq el-Jdideh, or to the café outside of Shatila, was important enough for Yassir to take the time to spontaneously talk to me about them and how they offered an occasion not to be in the camp occasionally, and not to think of it either, which was a way to hint that evoking my research was on that occasion a bad idea, a reluctance which has been observed by others (Puig 2012).

After a couple of hours, spending as much discussing as playing basketball, and as one of the friends invited was accompanied by her younger brother, we headed off to a close-by park where swings and such games could be found. Once in the small park, and after having a go at the swings, we tumbled upon one of the members of Shatila's PLO-affiliated PC, who had come to the same small park with his grand-child. The friendly ambience changed to hard looks and whispers. After greeting him coldly Yassir caught me by the elbow and pulled me aside: "You see that, Alex? That's what we were talking about the other day. Look at him, he's not even in the camp. What is he doing, he's going outside to have fun, I don't think he even works in the camp sometimes, he never goes there, just to take his money". This encounter on a Saturday, while the aim was clearly not to talk about the meetings or the camp, suddenly turned for Yassir into an occasion to remind me, himself, and his friends of the obvious problem of the camp's politics: that members of the PC were not in the camp, in which they never came, except to pick up their money.

A few weeks later, I negotiated with Nada and Yassir again, to conduct an interview with them. As usual with the group of young people invited to the group's public meetings, I met them in one of the streets around the entrance of the camp, where Nada's husband had a small café where they often gathered. As we met and made small talk, Nada began having a

conversation with her husband about the purpose of our meeting and explained we would be going to the organisation's offices in the camp and return a little later. Although we had met on the same place before going to meetings or events at the same offices in the past, Nada's husband and the few friends or regulars who were gathered at the place that day turned this common information of where we were going into a form of joking argument: "Oh, you're all going to Dahlan's association³³!", said Nada's husband, "You're all going to Dahlan's association again!", to which Nada answered in a similar joking fashion, eventually offering him to join us if he wanted. "Oh no," he answered, "I don't want to go and have anything to do with Dahlan and his association! You go to Dahlan's association and I'll stay there". The relation that has existed in the past between Mansour and the entourage of Muhammad Dahlan has frequently been evoked during the fieldwork in such a way, and could avoid the PYN activists. Mansour himself admitted to having had contacts with some of Dahlan's relatives in the past, although he relativised the anecdote and insisted that "When people want to trouble me, they will say I'm with Dahlan". According to a persistent rumour regarding the PYN, this initial proximity would contain the entire explanation of the organisation's existence, which would be the result of the collaboration between the less popular of the Palestinian elites and – as the rumour goes – some foreign intelligence services, in order to divide and harm the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon.

Place-work is always ambivalent, contested, and an object of struggles. Actors have to rely on proofs and valuation, and can then be dismissed. Just as the type of valuation of adventitious activities such as music-playing or having been helpful in a former job, the aim of these rumoural interactions is to question and put on trial one's pretention to autochthony.

³³ Muhammad Dahlan has been one of the controversial figures of the Palestinian nationalist movement since the early 2000s and the beginning of a conflict opposing him to Yasir Arafat, and later to Mahmoud Abbas. A Gazaoui member of Fateh, Dahlan was in the field often described as associated with the American and British secret services, corrupted, and a potential suspect for the assassination of Arafat. Whichever the groundings of such rumours may be, Dahlan was during the fieldwork a name associated to dubious political practices for most encountered camp-dwellers.

In this last section, I have developed a localised approach to resources, showing how the social attributes and dispositions of individual and collective actors mattered to comprehending the functioning of the organisations only insofar as these attributes and dispositions were actualised according to the relevant localised grammars engaged by these actors. This does not mean resources are purely subjective or representational: higher education, relations to political organisations, wealth, time, engagement in adventitious activities, locality, cannot be discursively “made up” by those who mobilise them, but at the same time have an importance in the space of the camps only because they are actualised in a certain manner. By focusing on the production of a certain type of local resource, autochthony, I have tried to show how that process takes place and what its effects are.

IV. Conclusion of the chapter

In this second chapter I have described the various organisations concerned by the study, by trying to focus on their inner working. I have intended to show that putting a strict distinction between social movements and NGOs would lead us to overlook the local meaning engagement in NGOs has taken in the camps in regard to the coexistence of several grammars of public engagement described in Chapter One. The category of NGOs itself covers a wide range of organisations and is hard to concentrate in one single unifying category. As such, I have inspired myself of an essentially interactionist literature which insists on the question of identifying the individual and collective actors, and the way they act with each other, in a group, through their local reality rather than from a top-down approach focusing exceedingly on legal status. This approach has led me to pay a particular attention to the history of individual activists as well as their groups, both in terms of resources and dispositions as in terms of strategies. The element which appears particularly neatly from this perspective, inspired by Eliasoph as well as Hamidi, is that the transformation we can perceive in the forms of engagement is linked to the adaptation, felt as necessary, of organisations to a way of existing in the camps.

The development of the associational, and to an extent the familiar, grammars of interaction, and its integration in the modes of functioning of the organisations, corresponds at the same time to large and small scale transformations, both in terms of availability of resources such as funding or support, and the individual careers of activists, encouraged by transformations in their recruitment. Besides, engagements towards local issues, mostly avoided or ignored by the explicitly “political” organisations allow avoiding internal conflicts which would endanger the cohesion of the organisations. By focusing on actions and framings considered as consensual, the organisations effectively managed to construct themselves as places which would suit very different kinds of activists, with very different experiences and trajectories, and to constitute themselves as places of sociability and socialisations, effectively relying on the constitution of familiar and work-based networks to create militant sociabilities: in addition to the development of a depoliticised vocabulary of motives, the very conditions of engagement and interaction within these groups make politicisation difficult and unlikely.

As providers of services and through the translation of external resources into local ones, the organisations finally managed to anchor themselves in the camps as unavoidable actors, considered through the form of individualised relation implied by patronage as local “do-gooders” to be listened to when the camps were concerned. Considering the question of resources through a geographical perspective shows how resources are engaged, questioned, and produced in concrete situations, and can be approached, rather than objective and external givens, as relations between diversely disposed actors. The way the relation to place itself is turned into a social resource which can be mobilised in conflict, in relation with adventitious activities, but can conversely be denied, and the process of face work implied by the mobilisation of resources at the local scale, is a good illustration of the model I proposed to employ in this research.

Having observed more in detail the studied actors and their inclusion to the camps’ space, I have intended to give a more accurate perspective of an often fuzzy category. In the next chapter, I will move to the question of the construction of engagements and local problems, to apprehend more clearly the contentious dimension of the case. I will show how the organisations manage to develop a political discourse that “does not speak its name”, by focusing on problems identified as “obvious” and “local”, which will be the object of the discussion of Chapter Three.

Chapter 3: Avoiding politics, politicising the everyday

My first experience of entering the camps was that of an entrance in a marginalized space. The passage from the well-lit, wide, warm, and cars-filled the city to the narrow, more humid, darker, and colder alleyways of Shatila was particularly vivid. The necessity to skip over puddles of water forming in parts of broken streets, to negotiate passage between scooters and piles of garbage when the streets were the most crowded, the occasional interpenetration of public and private spaces, when shops also happened to be alleyways or when friendly gatherings took place at street corners for lack of appropriate space, composed for the non-local which I remained throughout my presence an important way to experience the field. The many descriptions of the camps throughout the years have produced a specific miserabilist narrative structure, which came to mind when observing the camps, despite its lack of realism: the camps were in fact much more rich in meaning for their residents than my own naïve perception of them implied.

These representations were for the most part, of course, incorrect preconceived social and scientific images (Becker 1998:25) that always risk becoming elements of over-interpretation. The excessive and ridiculous aspect of the description corresponded to a certain narrative on the camps drawing on partial perspectives on their reality. As such the first step consisted in taking distances with the story reducing the camps to a spatial metonymy of their dwellers' lives, through a transparent "urban meaning" (Castells 1983), to investigate the complexity of these spaces beyond the reductive aspect of my own first opinion about them. The interviewees' discourses and my observations showed a more nuanced situation. Javier Auyero and Debora Swistun have shown the complexity of denouncing a polluted environment, even when its dwellers have access to expertise (2009).

I have discussed how constraining grammars of interaction are inscribed in the camps. This chapter will show how this constraint leads to forms of politicisation that take place within these frameworks. Through the experience of local issues, or to be more accurate of issues collectively constructed as specifically local, the “problems of the camps”³⁴, activists manage to frame a political discourse in the camps. I go against a part of the literature on the camps which assumes these issues as obvious and more directly accessed (without the prism of ideologies), falling into a form of sociological populism (Grignon and Passeron 1989). In this literature these problems are “taken for granted” or only emerging through individual experiences. This chapter will rely on the sociology of social problems to show how on the contrary they are the object of a work to identify, define, and qualify them. I will describe how the representation of the common problems, their thematisation and their framing is already inscribed in a process of contention, and should be apprehended as a part of the repertoire of actions engaged in that process. By putting together a public representation of the problems, activists also impose certain culpabilities of it, and certain ways to solve it.

³⁴ The expression “problems of the camps” (*mašakil al-muḥayyam*) was the one preferred by informants, along with “social problems” (*mašakil iğtimāʾiyyā*), also used in English occasionally). The terms overlap, and I have chosen to use the one most employed in the field here.

I. “Ma fi kahraba!”, situating local problems between experience and investigation

We are installed around a table in the room where Ahlam Laji’ usually organises the dancing classes. There are 17 people in the room, plus Anwar and I. Anwar’s notes indicate that the topic of the meeting is “Shatila Camp: Who does what?”. He begins explaining that he comes from Shatila and represents a new group, as well as the company Pursue. One of the women cuts him in the middle of his sentence: “Is this to do with the PC? You said it was not a political event”. Anwar insists that he does not represent a PC, and that no parties are involved, re-stating that he works for a company called Pursue which works with Ahlam Laji’. The reassured woman sits again. Anwar starts the discussion by asking what, in their opinion, would be the camp’s first problem. Immediately one of the women yells “Electricity!”, followed by others, evoking water, which is lacking and is salty, electricity, the presence of drugs, the poor health system, the absence of work, of hope, and the political factions. Most propositions are accompanied by supportive nods and exclamations by the others, who start adding anecdotes to what the former speaker just explained. Anwar lets the speeches take place, reformulating some sentences, summarising, and restating some things in his own terms. He often interrupts a participant to ask “Who is in charge of this? Did you talk to them about it?”. When the answer, generally “The CP” comes, he develops: “Who exactly in the CP?”. After which he circulates a document the others have to fill in. While the documents are being distributed, Anwar explains how all that they are talking about is a problem of governance: “We know the problems, but we don’t know who to talk to”. Anwar insists on the lack of knowledge: “If I want to work in the camp, I need to know how many people live here, does anyone here know? I don’t, myself. In Arabic we have five questions: What, Where, Who, When, and How. If we answer that we don’t have a problem anymore”. After which he starts detailing every remark that was on the filled-in documents, presenting what is the formal organisation in the camp, insisting that the people come to the future meetings organised by Pursue and the PYN, but also go and talk to the people he names. (FD, February 2015)

Being from Shatila, Anwar is no stranger to the experiences described by the participants. At this point he described them to me in great detail. What is at stake in this scene is not for him to “learn” anything new. Similar meetings happened regularly during the fieldwork. The participants were approached by the PYN through its associational activities. Meetings of the same sort occasionally happened within the PYN and Najdeh, when members

were invited for “training sessions” which focused similarly on specific problems in the camps. Some members were almost exclusively in charge of organising these meetings, either in formal or informal ways, and investigating the camps. Najdeh was for example in relation with a number of women whose main activity was to inform the camp’s office of the main issues arising around their houses and streets. Members of the PYN took photos in the camps and posted them on Facebook groups.

The PYN’s community meetings were another case: after a short presentation of the organisation – always accompanied by denials of the political aspect of the event and insistence on its separation from political parties – the participants would be invited to testify on their experience of what they thought were the main problems of the camp. Unavoidably the same topics re-emerged systematically, as did the very typical stories to illustrate them. After a few weeks some participants were very integrated to the groups, participating in investigations, or invited to meetings where the criticism of the PCs was more explicit. In its relation to the “ordinary” camp dwellers, the PYN recruited primarily through the “problems of the camps”. In this part I will describe the importance of the framing activities led by the studied groups to reformulate constantly these collective stories about the “problems of the camps”. The term represents a category of social problems which exists as attached to the space of the camps, and rooted in the experience of this space. I will describe how the activists put the camps’ space on trial, framing political issues while avoiding politics.

A. Local problems as political problems, a pragmatic proposal

In his seminal essay on urban social movements, Castells adopts an ambiguous position regarding the stakes of urban social movements. The author overlooks the process through which political problems emerge and how claims are made by the actors of contention: “the less people identify the source of their economic exploitation, cultural alienation, and political oppression while still feeling their effects, the more they will react against the material forms that introduce these experiences into their lives” (1983:326). By developing this perspective on what he calls an “urban meaning”, Castells manages to reattach the study of urban contention into a broader political perspective, but at the cost of two things: an analysis of how discontent is made, and a focus on how actors produce political meaning from the denunciation of what we would call in Castells’ words “urban contradictions”. The claims made by urban movements are relevant insofar as they serve a broader social change (Fainstein and Hirst 1995). This perspective is hardly satisfactory, and overlooks an important part of what social movement sociologists, in particular in the framing school, have added to the approach of social movements.

From urban meaning to local problems

The naming of what is or is not political in the field was never self-evident, neither was the narrative behind this identification. Castells’ perspective takes problems for granted as objective things, ignoring the social processes through which these problems are socially produced. As proposed by Mills, the distinction between private issues and political problems is essentially a question of publicity: “men in publics confront issues, and they usually come to be aware of their public terms” (1959:152). Sociologists of social problems such as John Kitsuse and Malcolm Spector show that “The emergence of a social problem (...) is contingent on the organization of group activities with reference to defining some putative condition as a problem, and asserting the need for eradicating, ameliorating, or otherwise changing that condition” (1973). This position has given birth across the years to a large body of studies on the theme of the construction of social problems, particularly well-illustrated by Joseph Guffield’s work (1981).

From this perspective the question of collective issues is essentially one of signification and production of discourses, which has been interrogated by a part of the framing school in social movements. Frame are socialised schemata of judgement, “shared by enough individuals to channel individual behaviours into patterned social ones” (Oliver and Johnston 2005), and the attention is therefore given to how feelings of injustice are conveyed to mobilise other actors (Traïni 2014), by realising diagnoses of situations (Cefaï 1996; Snow et al. 1986). But a problem can be present, acknowledged, and still fail to be publicised. In their insightful analysis of environmental suffering in Argentina, Auyero and Swistun describe how the construction of a public problem is not a strict matter of “false consciousness”: “Between the (contaminated) environment and the subjective experiences of it we find cognitive frames that, deeply influenced by history and by discursive and practical interventions, shape toxic knowledge” (2009:11). Following a similar, framing-attentive inspiration, Cefaï presents another risk: “[To reject naïve objectivism] does not lead to the end of the ontological question of the reality of social problems and the ethical question of legitimacy. (...) Many situations which could be thematised as equally urgent, dangerous, or damaging as public problems are silenced by the mass media, the ‘public opinion’, and the ‘public authorities’. But this does not imply that all public problems are collective fictions”. Or, as the author states it elsewhere, public problems are “neither pure and hard facts, nor inventions of the mind” (1996).

A pragmatic proposition on local social problems

The pragmatic approach proposes an original way out of the objective/subjective divide. Cyril Lemieux (2012) borrows the concept of “ontological gerrymandering” (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985) to describe an attitude according to which what is socially constructed is not reality as a whole, but certain representations of it. Lemieux’ proposal, instead, consists in “turning the objectivity of socially produced knowledges on the social and natural world the result of a double control, which grounds a complex dynamic: control of knowledges and individual expectancies by other members of the group; but also, and as much, control of shared collective representations by collective and individual experience” (2012). What this implies is the “objective reality” becomes a non-topic for research, while being indispensable for the researched actors: “it is not the constructed character of a reality which can be reproached; it is the *trials* which concur to the construction of this reality which can be considered insufficient or unsatisfactory” (2012). Rob Atkinson makes a similar proposal in his own model for approaching the evolution of urban problems: “the most obvious division is between those who adopt a social constructivist approach which asserts that the world is a discursive construct (i.e. nothing exists outside of discourse) and those who maintain the importance of the non-discursive (material) realm (the Real) as the basis for the existence of discourse(s)” (2000) From this basis the author proposes an approach which “maintains the importance of the latter position while accepting the significance of discourse in terms of structuring our understanding of the Real, having material effects on the Real and of discursive practices becoming materialized and embedded/institutionalized, through discursive practices, in the Real and thereby changing that reality. To put matters somewhat simplistically—there is a dialectical relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive such that one cannot exist (or be thought) without the other” (2000).

In other words we do not access a “real social problem”, “revealed” by a group of experts, nor a strictly “discursive” reality which would not exist but in a horizon of interlocution, but to look at how actors socially positioned engage in processes of critique by relying on methods of proof and test which are central to the material and symbolic experiences they have. By putting their representations on *trial*, both with the individual and collective experience of the world they and other actors have access to, and in relation to these actors. From a pragmatic stance “Critique emerges from clashes between different interpretations of the world in

distinct situations. Conflict is looming when there is disagreement in a distinct situation over which world interpretation (or ‘polity’) is relevant and is to prevail” (Blokker 2011). This leads to a focus on the narrative configuration of these interpretations, which are never free but bounded, as I have discussed in the last section of Chapter 1: “Human agents interpret distinct situations in which they find themselves by means of reference to justificatory narratives (‘polities’) and devices or *dispositifs* (which, together with the ‘polities’, form ‘worlds’)” (Blokker 2011). This is particularly true of situations of denunciation, and therefore, of the constitution of public problems, in which proving the existence of a problem is already making a diagnosis, a proposition of action, naming culprits and victims, and therefore inscribing it into a political apprehension of the world (Cefaï 1999).

Including space to the question of the study of social and political problems allows us to add another layer to the analysis by giving a particular importance to materiality and the unspoken. As evoked above, the lived, daily, and obvious dimension of the “problems of the camps” formed an essential part of their enunciation. Being close to the bodily experience does not make the dramaturgic dimension of social problems less essential (Lafaye and Thévenot 1993; Trom 1999). The spatial being a dimension of the social, we can apprehend it with the same tools as any other, by interrogating through which frames, which tests, and which representations it is apprehended.

One of the most productive ways to refer to the concept of *trial* in the case of urban or local problems can nonetheless be found in John Guidry’s reinterpretation of Lefebvre’s concept of *trial by space* (2003). In the example given by the author, “The contrast between the everyday life in the neighbourhood and the constitution’s language was used to put citizenship on ‘trial by space,’ as residents noted the absence of schools, public transportation, policing, garbage collection, and other amenities of urban life enjoyed in the wealthier neighbourhoods of the city centre” (2003). By putting the concept of citizenship on trial by space, Guidry argues, the activists managed to overcome the neighbourhood’s inhabitants’ original lack of interest for public engagement and to realise a “raise in generality” and publicise what would otherwise appear as a succession of personal issues. By the use of specific devices, appropriated to a certain context, the activists managed to construct lived realities (the absence of schools, etc.) into a political denunciation. A similar argument is made by Oslender when he looks at “the ways in which the aquatic space – as relational ontology – is reflected in the context of

political mobilization in the early 1990s” (2016:137) in the Pacific lowlands of Columbia. We see here a clear case of the methodological and theoretical implications of this literature, in which the social framings derived from relation to space are used to make valuations on the reality of political problems.

The grammatical model applied to the emergence of the problems of the camps

The relation to politics of the pragmatic approach and the model of the economies of worth which inspired my “grammars of space” model is presented by Mauro Basaure as essentially organised in tactical terms, particularly in Boltanski’s works: “These texts reveal the basic issue of normative grammars that, in the epicentre of politics, sustain public evaluative judgment of the legitimacy, facticity or even admissibility of the expression of a critique and, with that, the possibility that that critique is in a position to access the public world, of being elevated to levels of generalization which also are levels of institutionalization and condensation of social objects” (2011). The issue is not only how objects of contention are “unveiled”, but how they are made “real”, actualised, by entrepreneurs of social problems. Hence the interest for trials and tests of reality: “These tests not only imply the reference to principles of equivalency unique to the sphere of justice, but also a universe of objects from those spheres that allow pretensions of validity raised by the actors to be contrasted with the real world” (Basaure 2011). The question which arises from this concern is that of the means by which such a process is realised, and by which actions – being taken into account that action is given a broad meaning in this approach, which encompasses expressions, reflections, and self-reflections (Lavergne and Mondémé 2008) – tests are being made.

To tackle this question, an interest is particularly given to the concept of *device*. Devices can be thought of as non-human things which come into play in situations of interaction. As put by Barthe and al., “the sociology of trials has shown the interest to look closely at the way actors engage as bodies in the material devices they encompass or are forced to master. (...) In particular, they have worked to report the fact that *affordances* (or ‘grips’) are offered to or withdrawn from the actors by the socio-technical devices in which they are invited to engage themselves – which has a direct impact on their different capacities to learn as well as on the

shape of the knowledges they acquire”. As cognition is never made of context, the “socio-technical devices” (modes of proof, scientific languages, tools, or even structures of feelings and physical knowledge) are essential to the formulation of political propositions because they are objects of struggles. Pragmatic sociology asks the question from the actors’ perspective: “I do how?” (2013). Myriam Winance, for example, shows how policies oriented toward people in a wheelchair vary depending on whether those persons are apprehended as people interacting with wheelchairs, or people with wheelchairs interacting with other objects (Winance 2010). As a concept, “device” draws attention to the ways in which social interactions can become “bundled” around objects (Thévenot 2006). But it can also serve as means of studying the way mechanisms of framing in conflict are materially realised and how discourses are concretely made by people referring to “stuff”. This is in particular what Christophe Traïni, in his approach of the relation between emotions and mobilisations, does when he conceives the concept of sensitising device to describe “any material means, layouts of objects or staging used by activists to provoke the sort of affective reaction that produces involvement with, or support for, the cause” (2014). The concept of “framing” takes back its whole content and difference from “discourse”: “By appealing to the senses (sight, hearing, touch, and smell), sensitising devices are supposed to force the initially indifferent public to react as desired by supporters of the cause” (2014). I will rely on the concept of device in a slightly different way from Traïni’s: indeed while what the author investigates is emotions, the topic of my enquiry is space and place. I look at how the actors locate, with the perceptual framework at their disposal – the grammars of interaction – spatialised social problems. I will show how this process relies on an organisation of experience, on putting the camps’ space to the test, using a certain number of socially-acceptable procedures of investigation (and, therefore, by producing specific devices).

I called “worth”, “test”, “form of relevant proof”, “scale”, and “resource” in order, in the same manner as Thévenot, Moody, and Lafaye (2000), to describe forms of justification in making sense of the real. These concepts echo with the classical mechanisms of framing – frame-bridging, frame extension, frame amplification, and frame transformation (Snow et al. 1986). But one of my aims is to avoid the reductionist tendency described by Benford in which “Frames are often depicted in purely cognitive terms” (1997). Similarly it is to not apprehend frames as discourses, but really as socialised ways of perceiving the world. In the rest of this

section, I will therefore focus on several things: taking the “problems of the camps” as the primary stake of the studied mobilisations, I will describe this category and the ways in which it had been stabilised and was being stabilised as a body of public problems which were constructed and stabilised along similar lines, by similar actors, and according to similar grammars. I will attempt to focus as much as possible on how the “problems of the camps” arise from private issues to public problems, and on the processes of proof which shape them.

B. Reading the political in the urban

After our visit at the PC’s office, Hosni takes me to his own house. He lives in a small building a few streets away from the office. We pass in successions of small streets and large, public spaces, like a central square in which Hosni points at a building and explains that a project of water purification has been implemented in it. All the machinery is installed, according to him, but the project is still not working. After a small time walking we arrive at his house. Like most buildings in the camps, he explains, this one was built as time passed and was not planned. In the entrance Hosni makes me stop and shows me a small alcove to our left: there are power cables tangled in an intricate way, which all looks both unstable and dangerous to me. This is the power grid, Hosni explains, they did not yet get a distribution board installed. This is one of the issues for Hosni, as the electricity often stops working and is dangerous to manipulate. Hosni wants to change apartments and is looking for someone to buy his at the moment. He then takes me inside and quickly introduces me to his wife. We sit in a small living room decorated in a very classical way for the camp: posters reminding Palestine, especially the Al-Aqsa mosque, family photos, as well as pictures of Yasir Arafat and various representations of the PLO. Hosni and his wife have also accumulated souvenirs on several shelves, and he spends some time showing me a cigar box and photos of Ernesto Guevara he brought back from time he spent in Cuba. As usual I am under the impression of an extremely cared for interior which marks a sharp contrast with the lack of control on the exterior. Hosni takes me to a quick tour of the apartment and makes a point of taking me in particular to the bathroom. He says we have to turn off the lights in the living room before turning it on in the bathroom or otherwise the electricity will snap: “I pay for 20 amperes. I could pay for more, but it is very expensive.” He shows me the remnants of a tap, rotten by salt: “You see, I change the taps but this one I have kept it. All the taps are eaten by the salt, they rust in a few months.” He picks a part of the tap, which breaks apart easily and shows it to me, almost as a

token of good faith. When we sit back in the living room, and after we get coffee (in noticeably salty cups) Hosni starts immediately complaining about the water: he accumulates anecdote upon anecdote on the failures of the water distribution system in the camp, the water being undrinkable, when not entirely missing. A minority of people, according to him, buys water from alternative distributors, but the majority taps into the grid illegally. For Hosni, the “thefts” are caused by the absence of alternatives, but also by a culture of gratuity and a form of lawlessness: people do not want to pay and, besides, nobody would prevent them from tapping into official grids. In the apartment, another discourse from the one he had in front of the PC leaders also starts to unfold: “Yes I am nice to them, because, you know, the man you met, he’s the boss. But really they do nothing, they’re all working for themselves, they’re all corrupt.” (...) [Later on, as we are going out of the camp, we stop in a chess association, to meet with a “friend”, explains Hosni] As we are given some tea, I explain the reason of my presence, Hosni’s friend gets really angry and complains: “Here, when you are Palestinian, it’s forbidden to even live.” (FD, November 2014)

The question of urban services and local problems was regularly presented as one of the most important in the camps³⁵. The state of the water distribution systems, the bad electrical provision of the camps, and the hazards met with both of these networks were part of the broader impression of living in a marginalised environment. The “problems of the camps” were never defined as a strict list of problems which concerned the camps, but rather as a category of issues which could be quoted as proofs of the existence of a problem with the camp in general. These problems cannot for this reason be seen as mere deprivations of existing needs. First, specific issues could be considered “problems of the camps” at a specific time and, while still being acknowledged as problems, not connected to this category at another time or for another actor (such was the case of drug consumption, sexual harassment, or access to classes³⁶). Second, because the approach attributing social problems to pre-

³⁵ Every interview conducted with activists and funding organisations, as well as Mar Elias’ United PC, answered in this way. UNRWA’s website’s “Camp Profiles” (2014) classed housing condition and infrastructure as main problems for 9 out of 12 camps in Lebanon.

³⁶ The Najdeh-organised demonstration on the “problems of the camps” excluded the problem of drug consumption, for example, which was associated to those problems by members of the gender-based violence programme in interviews in the same NGO. Similarly, a conflict existed between the participants to the CfW

existing needs tends also to assume that the social world is entirely transparent to social actors and to contribute to “ontological gerrymandering” by opposing the “actual”, “concrete”, and “real” problems of “the real people”, to the “conceptualised”, “abstract”, and “produced” problems of “the elite”. Urban problems are as much socially constructed as other categories of social problems, even if they are anchored in the physical experience of space. If they are constructed as obvious, this “obviousness” must be questioned. As I will show in the next pages, the category “problems of the camps” was essentially used to distinguish certain social problems from others.

Apprehending urban problems beyond the label of “popular politics”

The importance of the politics of infrastructure and material life in the Middle East and across the world is not a new matter. The “problems of the camps” were neither exceptional nor abnormal in Beirut. On the contrary, “Beirut’s electricity crisis, as an everyday force, has become a major factor in the (re)production of the uneven geography of the city” (Verdeil 2016). Thus, the place of electricity, as well as other services, in popular politics is essential in the city. User practices are particularly questioned. For Verdeil, “tampering with electricity meters in Beirut is a form of grid resistance that is not explicitly accompanied by clear demands expressing a political meaning” (2016). They can nonetheless lead to it. Ziad Abu-Rish notes that questions such as electricity have had an essential place in political life as soon as the mid-20th century (2014). Social movements concerning access to electrical power and other urban infrastructure have contributed to shape the form of modern Lebanese politics, and marked the last years of the colonial period strongly: Carla Eddé for example associates the 1922-1931 mobilisation wave around electricity to the growing desire for political participation of the population, noting the importance of the movement in the most dominated parts of the cities, especially the Beirut “banlieue” (2013). Urban problems in a way become the medium via which broader issues get to be tackled, either by a process of

project in Shatila and of the camp office on whether gender-based violence was a problem of the camp, if not a problem at all (FD, April 2016).

raise in generality or avoidance of a direct approach of political issues which could lead to greater repression (Abu-Rish 2015; Razazan 2015; Vairel and Zaki 2011b). Yet the centrality of these matters for popular mobilisation does not mean that they mark a strict opposition between integrated elite and margins: Carla Eddé for example shows how the electricity crisis in 1922-1931 is the occasion for notables to recompose their political resources (2013). The camps were subjected to similar, but context-specific, dynamics.

The “problems of the camps” were particular because they were materially experienced almost permanently. Diana Allan associates the acquisition of reflexes such as turning on the alternative electricity to acculturation in the camp (2014). Such reflexive experience of space was present in my fieldwork as well. The urban problems became a background, reminding of the very material dimension of the problems discussed with the informants: from the Najdeh activists turning on, and off, and on again various sources of electricity, to members of the PYN showing videos of rainwater filling the streets during heavy rains, or interviews interrupted by power cuts. There is an interrelation in the camps between the way the environment is perceived and lived in the everyday and social representations of Palestinian-ness in Lebanon. Allan uses the webs of wires hanging over the camps’ streets as a metaphor for the dynamics of power equally as bundled around these spaces (2014:108).

Allan describes with precision the actions of tapping, refusing to pay specific fees to the PC officially in charge of service distribution, or denouncing failures and corruption through rumours spoken behind the PC members’ back. These are a form of street politics: “The illegal cables now knitting the buildings and walkways of Shatila together represent an assertion of need as well as a form of collective mobilisation – a compensatory and provisional local power structure” (Allan 2014:105). If these can develop into protest, such as with the election of an alternative PC in 2005 by the population, she argues that “These periodic acts of protest (...) represented an alternative mode of political action whose very effectiveness seemed to derive from its ad hoc informality” (2014:120). The expression “problems of the camps” was used to describe a group of social problems particularly vivid in the dwellers’ daily life. The distinction from “political problems” was constant:

These demands are demands, I don't know how to say they are everyday demands, for improving the life of people, enough with politics already. We do not demand a change of the system or anything like that. We do not care about the political problems the problems we care about are the problems of the people. These are everyday problems. Yes. (Nada, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

Taking a closer look at the mobilisations around these problems, the obvious and informal aspect fades to show a continuity of pre-existing social and political relations. The “problems of the camps” were the result of an interplay between bodily experiences and social representations. They were essentially framed as self-evident, directly experienced, concrete realities. This becomes particularly important when considering the “problems of the camps” in relation to other groups of public problems similarly existing in the camps at the same time, essentially as a result of the struggle around their definition.

The “problems of the camps” and the other problems: a universe of public problems

Categories of social problems only exist in relation to others (Blumer 1971). Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk insist on this competitive nature, arguing that “interactions *among* problems is central to the process of collective definition. (...) First, social problems exist in relation to other social problems; and second, they are embedded within a complex institutionalized system of problem formulation and dissemination” (1988). The authors develop a model based on the concept of arenas, which are the social institutions which

participate in the emergence of social problems and in their progressive publicisation³⁷: “Competition among social problems occurs simultaneously on two levels: First, there is competition for space between substantively different problems, as priorities are set as to which problems are important and therefore merit public space. Second, within each substantive area, there is competition over definitions, that is, between alternative ways of framing the problem” (1988). Social problems exist in social universes in which different groups in different public arenas try to carry both priorities, obtaining attention on specific issues before others, and on what exactly is at stake with these issues. While the “problems of the camps” were widely referred to by the activists as indubitable, other interviews showed how this was not consensual:

Of course we do have some problems, some small problems. But you have the social problems, and then the economic problems. The economic problems concern work, the right to work, for the Palestinians of course. Here the question is that the Lebanese law on work is oriented against the Palestinians. Here in Lebanon the Palestinians have been residing since 67 years. In any country in the world, as a person, would obtain a visa, which you can extend, you would get a working permit, and all the civic rights. Except, God be blessed, in Lebanon, where there is not a single right. (...) Now the first thing we do as a PC, in each camp, is to serve as a municipality inside the camp. [He pauses] The role is to take care of the civic/urban [*madanī*] community in all of its needs. This involves of course its daily needs, the provision of water, and the service of electricity. (...)

Regarding the state of the camp, the conditions of living, the water, the infrastructure, is it a bit hard?

³⁷ In the model presented by Hilgartner and Bosk, or for that matter by other theorists of social problems (Blumer 1971; Cefai 1996; Dewey and Rogers 2016; Gusfield 1981; Kitsuse and Spector 1973; Williams 1995), the arenas are not defined as a laundry list of legitimate groups providing access to the public, although examples are quoted, among which forms of government, newspapers, mass-media, action groups, pieces of art, and so forth. The question does not lie in supposing a universal definition of the public sphere, but to open attention to which actors and institutions effectively play the role of vectors of publicisation of problems. In the context of the camps, of course, these institutions are by definition specific. In particular the importance of the Internet, of rumours, of public meetings and events, daily conversations, and the like was greater than that of the television or newspapers, would it only be because of the relative absence of these media.

No, it's good!

Good?

It is good! There is water, there is electricity. Of course we have small issues, for example we need to get soft water, like in all Lebanon. We have a project to solve that. The electricity is there, there is electricity! There is electricity just like in any region in Lebanon! No less, maybe even more! But no less. And there are savings to take care of the question of electricity. We get electricity just like anywhere in Lebanon. (Burj al-Barajneh's PLO PC, April 2015)

This exchange highlights a few ways in which the “problems of the camps” do not appear as obvious for all actors. Their very existence as a permanent, actual problem is questioned by the interviewee, who dismisses any particular problem with access to the urban services. While all interviews with activists and camp dwellers were organised around a common theme of the camp described as an overall difficult place to live, this interviewee was one of the few to describe the camp's situation as good. The feeling that members of the PCs were detached from the realities of the camps was often presented in small talk with or among camp dwellers, especially after confronting the PCs with the “problems of the camps”. The recurring argument according which the situations described as “problems of the camps” were normal in Lebanon was particularly badly received as a sign that “They never come to the camps and don't know how we live”.

Beyond the negation of the exceptional dimension of the “problems of the camps”, the interview shows the way in which these problems are defined primarily by their opposition with others. The common narrative encountered in the field, and ever only marginally questioned, was that the “problems of the camps”, whichever they were, were distinct from at least two other political problems: the problems of Palestinians in Lebanon, particularly illustrated by the campaign for the right to work (the “economic problems” mentioned in the excerpt), and the right of Palestinians as a nation and a people, particularly illustrated by the

various forms of nationalism³⁸. This competition did not take place in an abstract manner and could be the occasion of clashes.

I have been invited to one of the recurrent events oriented at maintaining a culture of nationalist resistance in Burj al-Barajneh camp. On the invitation of Markaz al-Naqab, the renowned Palestinian activist and member of the Palestinian National Council, Leila Khaled, was invited to speak in the context of the week of commemorations around the Nakba. The event was mostly managed by al-Naqab, but received support from the OLP PC and its members. Ms Khaled presented in a room in the camp which was at the same time housing a small exhibition commemorating rural Palestine, and in front of an audience of around fifty people installed on plastic chairs, on a panel regrouping one member of the PC and a local religious leader, discussed the historical and contemporary value of the nationalist value of *sumūd* (steadfastness). The topic of the talk was to remind of the concept as one of the pillars of Palestinian nationalism, and to expand on the meanings of resistance and remembrance in the current period. The audience, beside the activists from al-Naqab, was mostly composed of middle-aged and older camp dwellers, among whom a number of officials, but also ordinary Palestinians. While moving in, I feel eerily out of place and stay at the back of the room, where I have the surprise to find Bakr and Kader among the few young people of the room. We wave from a distance, we are already seated several rows away from each other. I am surprised, at that point, having seen both of them a few days earlier and not heard of their coming to this event, but also complained about the “uselessness” of such meetings, where “you must go to be seen, but that’s all”. After the talk, a session of questions and answers is opened for the public, and quickly, Bakr takes the floor, asking directly what the point of the event is, why they are using time to talk about these issues. “I am sorry”, he explains, “but the real problem is not that. Look at this man” (pointing to Kader) “he has always lived in the camp, he is a son of the camp, and youth, as you were, and I respect you, but he is here and without a job since several years, and we have to come and listen to people talk to us about resistance and *sumūd*, but that’s not the problem for us! We don’t have a problem of resistance, or a problem of *sumūd*! Look at the camp, and I tell you this man who is a very fine man, staying all these years without work, without anything! The camp is in a very bad state, we

³⁸ To these two problems, a third narrative could be added which would encompass the range of problems defined by religious groups, as hinted by a part of the literature (Rougier 2007; Achilli 2015). Nonetheless the focus of this study and the fieldwork practiced only led to a few encounters with such actors.

don't have time for this, the real problems are in the camp, and nobody talks about it, this is our resistance!". Some people in the audience cheer him at the end of his short speech, and following interventions acknowledge what he talked about, but the general ambience after his intervention is subtly changed to uncomfortable. When I mention the episode with Bakr a few days later, he chuckles and answers, half-jokingly: "That's where they're going to hear us, Alex. So that's where we go". (FD, May 2015)

This episode shows one of many cases of the sorts of conflicts of valuation which mark the affirmation of the "problems of the camps" as a category of public problems independent from but in relation with other problems. While the organisation of the event aimed at putting forward the very legitimate forms of discourses surrounding the problem of the land and of exile, the PYN members' goal was to approach different issues, the economic problem at first, but also the "problems of the camp". For local activists, the reference to the other categories of problems was always at the same time to be done, partly because of the necessity to acknowledge legitimate categories of political expression, and something taken with a certain critical dimension compared to what constituted the "real" or the "urgent" problem. This became even clearer on days when big demonstrations were organised on the topic of the right to work in particular, or of the rights of the Palestinians in Lebanon: except on ritualised dates such as Nakba Day or Land Day, the local activists were generally absent, focusing their priorities on different, more urgent, endeavours. When nationalist or memorial topics and their "gravitational pull" were imposed by the researcher, "nationalist imperatives would give way to aspirations conceived in terms far more personal" (Allan 2014:7). This does not make these problems "more real", nonetheless. These interactions constituted a part of the struggles to impose certain problems against others, by situated actors. I will illustrate the processes of construction and political labour behind the emergence of the "problems of the camp" in the following sub-section.

C. Everyday devices, investigation and studies: anchoring problems of the camp

Rumours and anecdotes

For most informants the “problems of the camps” constituted an annoyance constantly reminded by daily life itself. Turning on an alternative supply of power, Shielding as much as possible front doors from the inflow of water during heavy rains, lowering one’s head when walking in a specific alleyway to avoid the electricity cables, using bottled water for washing, etc. could be seen as daily coping strategies (Roberts 2010) in front of urban marginalisation. Those also existed in discussions. The repetition of anecdotes incidents and accidents contributed to a feeling of constant deterioration of the camps. As one of the activists of Najdeh said in an informal discussion about the topic, “You get up and go to work, and you see the bad infrastructure, you see that this building has collapsed. Or is going to collapse. You get to work and people talk about it, so you are always thinking about it”. During my first visit to Najdeh in Burj al-Barajneh, in December 2015, for example, I was invited to meet the mother of the victim of an accident with the electrical cables. Like many others, her story was known in the camp and the subject of discussions.

Impressions were reinforced by memories of the camps in the past and a shared impression of worsening of their situation over time. The tight-knitted “good camps” of the past with their broad streets, decorations, trees, open space, air, sunlight, and other amenities contrasted with the densification of the built environment, deterioration of the built environment, dampness, coldness, and darkness of the restricted public space, largely anonymous due to the increase in the camps’ population. Some dwellers regretted the cutting of trees to make place to new buildings. Others complained that it was not possible to let children alone in the streets. If the camps were in a bad state compared to previous periods then it became possible to evoke the failings of the various forms of leadership and authorities and the transformation of the population’s composition. Anecdotes and memories, gossip in general (Elias 1994) were means of talking about the group under the pretext of individual cases. When Abu Salem showed me, with great hilarity, the video he had taken during the recent flood, the goal was not only to laugh, but also to illustrate the state of the camp’s leadership itself.

By relying on private anecdotes and exemplifying following the mode of rumour, camp dwellers managed to avoid openly public discussions while still maintaining public-oriented ones (Eliasoph 1997). Activists acknowledged that talking to camp dwellers about the “problems of the camps” was a good way to both inscribe collective actions with possible immediate results and constitute what Joëlle Zask, drawing from John Dewey, calls a public: “A public is the totality of people having full access to data concerning the affairs which concern them, forming common judgements regarding the conduct to hold based on this data and benefiting from the possibility to openly express these judgements” (2008). In a public space structured around an untold rule to avoid the openly political, we see the importance of investigations aiming at making this data emerge, and the devices engaged in these investigations.

Such activities could be seen in the activists’ interaction with other dwellers. During a walking interview with Abu Salem, we arrived in front of the SDC reverse osmosis tower. At this stage the project was active and camp dwellers could obtain soft and potable water during two hours per day in exchange of a monthly fee. As we approached it, Abu Salem engaged a local resident whose home faced the tower. After showing me how the distribution system worked and explained it to me, both of them started joking about how “these were the most expansive taps in the world”: “You see Alex this project costs 2 million dollars, and what have we had for it? Four taps. That’s all. That’s why these taps are locked [each distribution point was locked outside of distribution hours], so that people will not steal them: each of them is worth 500.000 dollars! 2 million dollars, four taps, that’s 500.000 dollars each tap!”. Abu Salem then began chatting with our interlocutor, complaining that the water was not free of charge while it was a public service. Our interlocutor was outraged that the water was not connected directly to homes: “What do they think? We’re not peasants living in villages where you have to go to the well anymore!”. In conclusion of which he explained that he anyway preferred relying on alternative water providers which he had to pay as well but who at least delivered water to his home, instead of partaking in “corruption”.

Relying on such material devices was a part of the process of trial by space. Space and the material themselves were a part of the organisation of grievances and the daily repetition of denunciations made space “speak for itself”. For certain organisation members, such mundane interactions were in fact a part of daily rounds and routines, as was the fact of coming to

NGOs' offices and, among the flow of casual information exchanged in the course of daily conversations, to participate in the constant repetition of anecdotes, small stories, jokes, and rumours which constituted a daily reminder of the constant presence of the "problems of the camp". I believe that unlike with Scott's "[subordinates] ways of getting their message across, while staying somehow within the law" (Scott 1990), the real was being constituted. The individual cases and issues were informally publicised, and weaved as collective problematic experiences.

Putting space to the test

As in Guidry's case, putting space of trial related to the work of entrepreneurs of public problems. For Tarrow movement entrepreneurs' action in mobilisations is mainly to mobilises consensuses and make common interests evident (2011). This demanded a lot of work to frame the "problems of the camps", produce proofs of their existence, tangibility, and relevance. A large amount of the PYN's resources for example was invested in investigation around the "problems of the camps". This investigation took several forms, in particular a website on which camp dwellers could answer a questionnaire on their daily issues. This statistical collection allowed the PYN members to present an "objective" and "scientific" face in encounters with the PCs. This was how Ahmed, recently engaged with the PYN, through his previous engagement as a teacher for Ahlam Laji, came to participate increasingly in the forms of activism practiced by the organisation:

I talk to people. I go to see them and I ask, what is your problem, what is your suffering? And they tell me what it is, so I wrote down what they tell me and I go to the head of Pursue and I said this and that.

And what about al-lijneh al-ahlieh, when did you start going?

When it began, six months ago. But nothing changes you know, *al-lijneh al-ahlieh* it talks only, people come and say we have this problem, but they never change. We go, the people they all shout and scream, there was a meeting and people started to do that and to chant, but after we went home and things remain the same. There is no electricity, people say it, no garbage cleaner, no sewage also, infrastructure is bad, drugs also... (...)

But I mean going to the meetings and talking about these problems, you, yourself, how did you start?

People told me you can go, and also there is a website, where you go, there is... there are, you can see, all different problems in the camp, so you go, fill in the blanks, and you inform them about all the problems. Also on Facebook there is. When I talked to the boss of Pursue, he told me look, fill the website and we will settle the problem in one year. So we go to the meeting. Also my friends. (Ahmed, Shatila, April 2015)

Ahmed's case was common the PYN, as described in Chapters 1 and 2. Employment with the organisations was a first step into a career of engagement, of which participating in investigations was an important part, investigation being part of the process of politicisation of the activists themselves. The activists were not recruited on the basis of a common grievance regarding the "problems of the camps". Rather, as Ahmed's case illustrates, participating in the investigation is a part of contributing to identify the "problems of the camps" and getting increasingly engaged with working on them. The "regular" or "normal" activity as NGOs of the studied groups served as an entry door to increasingly more contentious activities. For other activists, who had been recruited around the same period as Ahmed, this also served as a way to cover the camps more closely, therefore inscribing the organisations' discourses closer to the camp dwellers not only in terms of discourses and representations, but also in geographical terms:

S: My responsibilities is based on where do each of one live. If you see, for example, a problem in the street where you live, you write it online, you send it to Pursue.

So that's your job?

S: Yes, to look at the problems of the people.

L: And we have in our phones a group named for Shatila. Everything we see, we face, or focused it, we take a picture and send it to this group. On Whatsapp.

S: And there is a group on Facebook.

L: It's called *Hellha b'idak*, "Solve it by your hands"

Why do you think they chose you to do that?

L: I think we are the most preferred here, and every time you see us on the ground.

S: On the ground.

L: You know that, in our camp, down on the ground... Explain him.

S: Maybe the experience shows us. We know a lot of people. In the camps. Others didn't know a huge number of people. (Samir and Latifa, Shatila, April 2015)

The main outcome of this broad range of activities was to shape and anchor the knowledge or impression of a problematic situation into concrete, observable realities, to engage in a process of trial or test in which discourses would be “tested” on space. This activity participated in the economics of proof employed to render the “problems of the camps” as visible as possible in permanence, not only in meetings with the PCs, but also in public space.

By putting the failings of the PCs on trial by space the PYN engaged in public denunciation. The short-lived “Upside-Down News” campaign was an example of this approach, in which the organisation published placards presenting fake news representing how the camps should be managed. The example presented on Figure 18 is typical of the campaign, informing readers of the fictional intention of Burj al-Barajneh's PC to sanitise the water and electricity systems in the camp, as per its responsibility, associated with the warning “This information is not true, its aim is to sensitise the general audience to the role of the Palestinian PCs in the services in Lebanon”. Other placards were produced, highlighting the necessity for PCs to organise elections, provide monetary support, and other responsibilities officially befalling the PCs but not effectively undertaken (Annex 2). To further their claims, the activists published the guidelines for the organisation of the PCs produced by the PLO and started distributing them in meetings and other public events, as a part of a campaign called “Apply your system”, insisting, in the document's introduction that their initiative was “apolitical” (Figure 18).

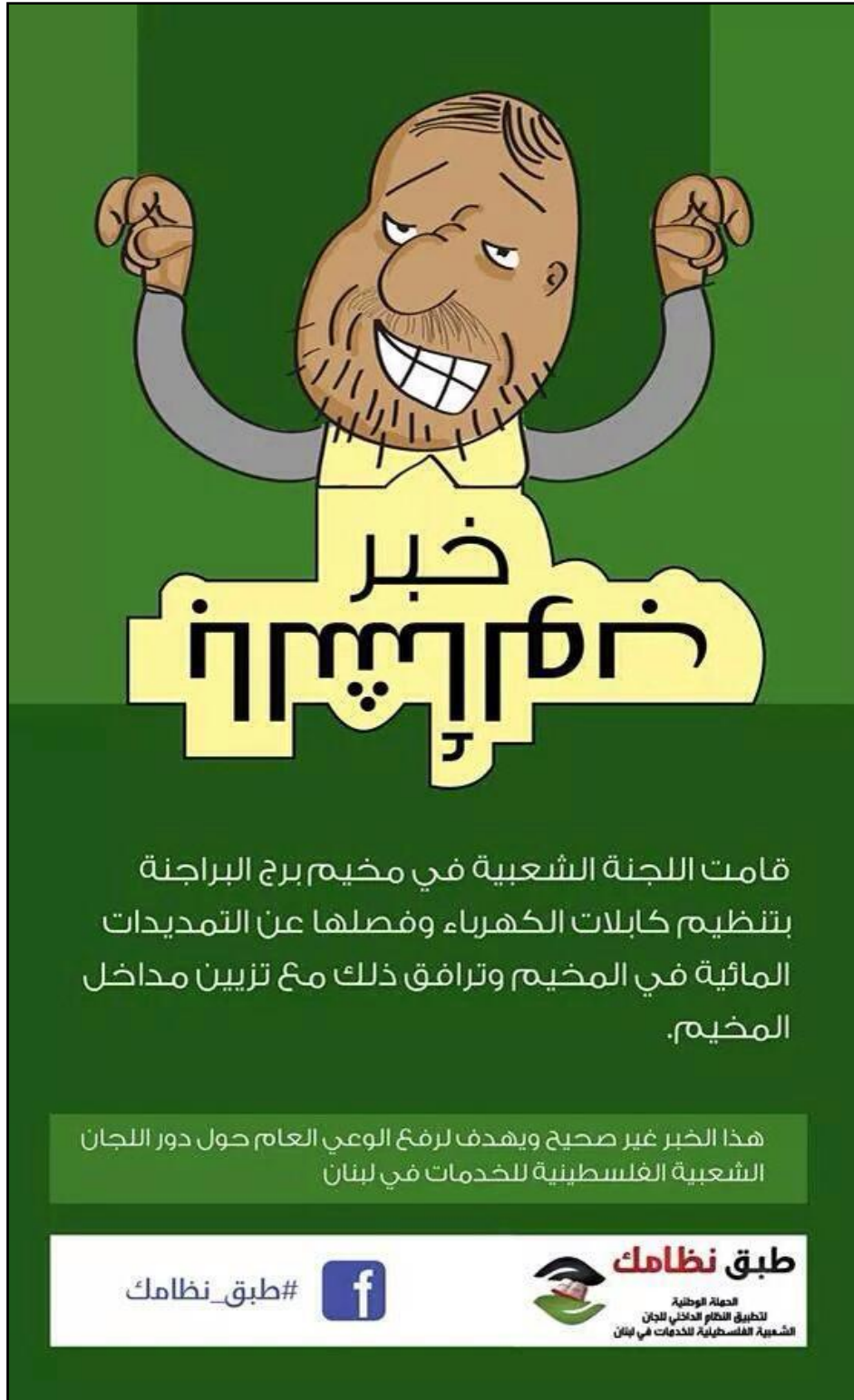


Figure 18: "Upside-Down News", PYN

Conversely, the NGOs' actions were also put on trial by space by the activists. The CfW participants relied on the publicisation of their action. For the project's managers, the first issue was to convince all the participants, who were not permanent members of the project, to keep on wearing the yellow jackets they were provided with: "It is important that they are seen", explained Tariq, "Because then people know what we do, they know what the project is for". The same reason was used to explain the placarding in the camp's street of posters informing readers of what the project was for (Figure 19).



Figure 19: "Our camp cleaned by our cooperation", Najdeh

When looking at the members of the project at work, nonetheless, mere information on the project taking place was not the only aim of the placards, jackets, and other devices employed by the group. The rounds were systematically accompanied by “more respectable” or “more known” members, not participating in the garbage-collection, but using the occasion of the rounds to engage with passers-by, in particular considering the fact that the rounds happened during some of the hours when the camp was the most crowded. One of the most frequent of these accompaniers, Salman, frequently engaged with groups of passers-by, presenting himself and the other members saying “It’s us, UNRWA, we’ve come to do the job!”, engaging in small talk regarding the camp’s state, and the “good values” of the youth engaging for their camp.

The work itself served as a test: in the repetitive scenes in which Salman would magnify the project as a model of good action in the camps, the absence of the official structures in charge of camp management was highlighted, and the praises repeated by the encountered camp dwellers toward the “brave youth” were in the end as many words against the official structures. Visibility was an explicit objective in organising the rounds, the trajectories of which were mapped in the main office in order to cover not only the widest and more frequented streets of the camp, but also the most emblematic ones (Fig 20). After a few weeks these practices were augmented by an increasing number of actions, with members starting operations of repainting of the streets, another group began organising home visits in various buildings of the camps in order to give more visibility to the actions, the problems associated with them, and employ them as a basis to voice other issues.



Figure 20: Mapping work: Najdeh's Cash for Work project

Contrary to what the explicit discourse of NGOs was, their actions were not mere answers to people's needs. We can see a constant iteration of collecting claims, translating them into public discourses, associating them in a broader category, attributing responsibilities, taking actions to solve problems, giving them more visibility, and returning to individual experiences in order to identify more issues. By putting normative representations on how the camps should be managed on trial by space, the activists managed to shape a number of common social representations which, without being perceived as "political", ended up forming a solid ensemble of politicised frames, denouncing *de facto* the camps' status quo.

The category of the "problems of the camps" was formulated as specifically local. This enunciation relied on a diversified repertoire of social resources. These ranged from technical expertise to popularity and knowledge of the communities, access to groups, and participation in adventitious activities. Being organised as associations was indeed necessary, as we have seen, for the inclusion of the studied groups in the camps as social spaces and their acknowledgement as legitimate to speak in public. For the groups in question, space provided at the same time a proof and means to carry an acceptable discourse. In contrast, the

undertaking of “self-help” activities was not separate from this denunciation, but on the contrary explicitly displaying behaviours of good doing worked as another part of the trial by space. We are not confronted with an unplanned and spontaneous form of popular politics, but rather with a tactic (De Certeau et al. 2010), the slightly planned actions undertaken by dominated actors to divert a situation the rules of which they are unable to directly confront. I will develop this argument in the next part by showing how, relying on the category of “problems of the camps”, the studied organisations managed to produce some forms of politicisation under constraint (Vairel and Zaki 2011a).

II. Confronting authorities, denunciation and contention in the camps

On several occasions during the fieldwork cases of collective contentious actions happened around the “problems of the camps”. Instead of marches and sit-ins, the forms of contention observed in the camps belonged to a different repertoire, employing modes of actions emerging from the associational grammar and locally relevant. One of the first ways in which spatiality has been associated with the study of social movements has been the attention given to the many ways in which repertoires of contentious action are adapted to the physical layout they take place in (Routledge 1997, 1994, 1993; Sewell 2001; Tilly 2000, 2003; Zhao 1998). We could ask the meaning an event such as a demonstration would have in the specific urban fabric of the camps and their narrow alleyways. It is somewhat telling that the only events of the sort observed in the camps during the period of fieldwork were relatively deconflictualised, the marches and sit-ins being either consensual (as with marches supporting the Gaza Strip, which united all political actors), or taking place outside of the camps (as with sit-ins for the right to work).

I am trying to observe claims made within the camps and toward either institutions or persons present in these camps. As much as the category of the “problems of the camps” existed relationally, collective actions followed specific repertoires with local meanings. Certain interviewees who had participated to demonstrations rejected this term because of its contentious content, in particular. Even considering these attempts to deconflictualise these actions, two elements incite treating them as contentious actions. First, they correspond to a collective and planned action in order to carry out a political denunciation in public space, not only despite their relative discretion, but because of it. Second, because they were formed by series of tactical moves by which actors defined and redefined strategies depending on the available social resources and context. In this section, after describing the model I follow to approach these collective actions, I will describe a number of them and return on their temporal unfolding, to show how we are confronted with the definition of locally-meaningful repertoires of collective action, which did not emerge by default of others, but as strategies in and of themselves.

A. Denouncing in public space

This section focuses on contentious events. I employ the concept to refer to “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants” (McAdam et al. 2008). Because of the nature of the system of governance in the camps I set aside the restrictive definition of politics as interactions with a government. This distinction has first not been consistent in the authors’ work who include “mighty people and people lacking might” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1996), but also riots against minority groups (McAdam et al. 2008:124–30) to contentious events. Restricting contentious events to either of these relations (between governments and people or between dominant groups and dominated groups) in many ways finds severe limits when confronted with cases where authority is fragmented and unclear to those who experience it, cannot be found altogether, or is spurious. Besides, contentious politics are employed by dominant actors as means of their domination by “playing” the street against other actors (Auyero et al. 2009), or for the preservation of attributes of their domination (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 2010). The boundaries of the category “contentious action” are too porous to produce a clear-cut definition which would account for the entirety of the boundary cases. I choose to rely on the given definition relying on the three criteria of episodicity, publicity, and identification of interested claim-makers and claim-receivers, looking at them as situations of politicisation.

The events described here do not always entirely fit these three criteria, in particular regarding the disruption of the institutions’ routine. Identifying procedures and habitual processes of decision-taking is difficult for the persons engaged in interaction. This does not mean that such procedures do not exist, but there was frequently a degree of doubt for a number of participants as to what exactly was the proper definition of the situation they were situated in. This was reinforced by the use that was made of such a “classical” repertoire of mobilisation by the partisan organisations: the very term “demonstration” (*muzāharat*) was not employed to describe contentious, transgressive, or disruptive events as much as regular occasions. Demonstrations were generally organised by the parties, around consensual issues. Although these events mirrored the conflicts between the Palestinians in general and the Lebanese government or other institutions, they constituted highly routinized occasions. Gatherings for

the right to work at the ESCWA were marked by a relatively relaxed ambience. The most important PC members and association activists were present, but so were young children playing on the small greens in front of the building, or younger activists coming “to do something” (FD, April 2015). Demonstrations were also the occasion for camp dwellers to come to the capital – the parties paid the buses – to reactivate patronage networks, reminding parties of their support. This was also a motivation of avoiding demonstrations for certain informants. My aim here is not to disregard these forms of collective action as irrelevant. On the contrary, the most explicitly political issues and events bore a particular importance in the life of the camps. They nonetheless held a marginal place for the studied actors, as far as contention was concerned.

Although they relied on a diversified repertoire including discreet actions, mobilisations around the “problems of the camps” included an important part of public denunciation and conflict. I will first clarify the conceptual model with which I intend to approach the observed sequences of events in the second and third section, focusing on the question of denunciation.

A pragmatic model of denunciation

In *Dynamics of Contention*, the authors choose to consider contentious events as public performances participating in the production and stabilisation of the participants’ identities: “[Actors] put on a performance of mutual, public claim making by paired identities. In the name of their collective identity, interlocutors for actors demand, command, require, request, plead, petition, beseech, promise, propose, threaten, attack, destroy, seize, or otherwise make claims on assets that lie under someone else’s control. When interlocutors for others reply in the name of their own political identities, an episode of contentious politics has begun” (2008:137). This model, which finds echoes with researches on framing processes, has for main interest its focus on how contentious events are the moments of a production as well as a representation of symbolic objects (identities, claims, etc.), as well as moments marking a power struggle. The theatrical dimension of contentious events has been investigated in other cases (Cefai and Lafaye 2001; Trom 1999), the authors inscribing themselves in framing model through a pragmatic take. From this perspective the question is centred around the uses of competences in relation to a context, the actors trying to realise adequate “moves” in regard

to the situation (Mathieu 2002). Therefore the model moves towards a sociology of polemic interactions and denunciation by asking what makes a successful or unsuccessful public denunciation.

The theme can be traced back to texts in ethnomethodology, in particular Harold Garfinkel (1956), but also Erving Goffman's work on face work (1982), but is renewed by Luc Boltanski's work (1984). Boltanski aims at producing a model which relies on the theatrical analogy, in relation to a public-private continuum: "A denunciation institutes indeed a system of relations between four actants³⁹: 1) a denouncing one; 2) one in favour of which denunciation is accomplished; 3) one in the detriment of which it is made; 4) one towards which it is operated. (...) Each of these four actants occupies a determined position in a continuum going from the most subjective to the most collective" (1984). The degree of proximity or alterity between the actants, first between the denouncer and the victim, second between the victim and the denounced, constitute what Boltanski calls an actancial system of public denunciation, and determine in the end the sense of acceptability of a denunciation: "A denunciation is not considered abnormal (which does not mean it will be judged morally justifiable or 'legitimate') when the actants occupy roughly homologous positions on the singular/collective axis: it is not abnormal to publically denounce in the name of a great national trade union the destruction of Palestinian camps by the Israeli air forces; (...) But it is not abnormal either, for a simple person, to denounce to a friend or a colleague, through hearsay and gossip, the unfair behaviour of their office's manager" (1984).

³⁹ The delimitation between an actor and an actant in sociology is somewhat subtle. According to Bruno Latour an actant could be considered as "something that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies no special motivation of human individual actors, nor of humans in general. An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action" (Latour 1996). As we see the concept's main interest is to overcome the illusion of rational action and reconcile in a single category human and non-human entities. We can thus perceive from previous examples how, in the model which we are relying upon here, the camp's various landscapes and spaces are instituted as actants on regular occasions.

The author invites finally to pay an attention to the grammars of common sense valuation, the social competence to judge, form another range of constraints to this expression of denunciation for it to be received as normal by a given audience. What is judged “normal” or not is not restricted to the content of a denunciation but also the actants in question, the forms of action undertaken, the collective bodies mobilised, and the repertoires of morality put on trial. Denouncing, in a pragmatic perspective, is therefore a particular form of face work.

Contentious action is approachable through this framework. For Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam, the method to follow draws on a theatrical analogy in which the typicality of interactions is to be put in tension with the actors’ improvisations in a tactical arrangement: “Performances within repertoires do not usually follow precise scripts to the letter; they resemble conversation in conforming to implicit interaction rules, but engaging incessant improvisation on the part of all participants” (2008:138). The actors are located in space and time, and make do with the repertoires at their disposal “here and now”. In this perspective contentious events become the occasions of the realisation of a collective claim via the actualisation of discourses, resources, networks, and symbolic goods in order to construct a socially acceptable public denunciation. These actions are mediated through the moral orders that are grammars of interaction: there is not one model of normativity at stake, but a plurality of them.

Focusing on polemic interactions

Because of the theoretical choice I make here, I choose to focus on polemic interaction in sequence. Indeed the aim is to follow on the theatrical metaphor and what will matter in this approach will be the way actors manage or fail at imposing a certain grammar versus or instead of another, in the form of transformation described by Garfinkel as essential to the process of denunciation: “In the statement that moral indignation brings about the ritual destruction of the person being denounced, destruction is intended literally. (...) It is not that the old object has been over-hauled; rather it is replaced by another” (1956). The process by which such affirmations are made and enforced has been particularly studied by pragmatic sociology as the sociology of controversies (Barthe et al. 2013; Blokker 2011).

Interest in controversies directly draws on the wish to focus on how actors make statements about the world in situated interaction. In the case of the public denunciation of the “problems of the camps”, such statements are framed and a relation of power is established between various parties to the conflict. This part of the process of a raise in generality from singular to collective issues is essential to their politicisation. I propose paying a particular attention to the forms and contents of interactions during the events in question, and in particular the succession of “moves”. These “moves” must in return be apprehended in sequence: indeed each interaction draws from past ones and has effects on future ones, which in turn can provoke as I will show complete transformations in the forms of action taken. Processes of framing and counter-framing and the resource investments they imply for the actors have effects on the collective definition of the reality, but “we hold each episode to be unique and contingent” (Gunning and Baron 2014:18). There can be “limits” put in very strict terms as other resources are mobilised by other actors, an action can be reframed as something different entirely, as well as a given situation.

Returning to the field after a period of absence was especially important for understanding this dynamic as, as I will discuss further down, the evolution which could be anticipated from the first observed sequence of events, between November 2014 and May 2015, did not occur and during the second period of observation between January and May 2016 the situation was considerably changed, from a tendency toward conflictualisation and publicisation, to an apparently abrupt abandonment of both mechanisms in favour of a return to more consensual modes of action, more adequately rooted in the associational and familiar grammars in which the actors had rooted their action. I will argue that this de-conflictualisation in public space did not mean a stop to the mobilisation, but a drawback from its publicity.

B. Conflictive interactions in the camps

Looking at contentious or polemic events through the framework which has just been presented, we should be able to identify how these events correspond to a public denunciation fitting a form of performance, and following certain grammars of interaction in public space. The spatial context in which the described interactions take place will be essential to see how the actors interact. I will return to three openly contentious events or series of events, to which I will add two boundary cases which were framed in interview as contentious by the participants. From these descriptions and the interviews concerning the described occasions with participants, I intent to describe polemic events as they produce collective groups and solidify claims through the process of public denunciation.

Contention in the camps: Two cases

- A small demonstration (From FD, January 2015)

I have an appointment with local activists in Burj al-Barajneh. On the way to the camp, I receive a phone call from the director of Najdeh's local office in the camp. She informs me that at 10 a gathering (*iġtimā'*) to defend urban renewal is organised and that the members of her group are going to participate. I had met this director in earlier visits, during which we had extensively discussed the problem of electricity and its effects especially on younger refugees.

Upon my arrival at the office, I find fewer than a dozen women gathered and having coffee. I am introduced and start enquiring about the gathering, as what it is exactly remains very unclear to me. It turns out that they are all going there except for the director, and one of them becomes my main interlocutor. I ask to hear a bit more on what the demonstration is about. Because of the low level of my Arabic and as a practicality, they immediately fetch a roll of signs made from wide coloured sheets of paper, which was placed in a corner of the room, and start showing them to me. A specific demand is written on each one: "the extension of the electricity networks as well as making safe the existing ones", "An increase of UNRWA's contribution to the treatment of serious diseases", "the problem of infrastructure via the maintenance of the sewage networks", "Stopping the integration of the Palestinians from

Syria to the classrooms”, and “A better account of the social questions and the research of a decent platform”. It will turn out that these are the exact demands from the declaration made on that day in the name of “the popular and democratic organisation – Nada”, which organises the gathering.

After these explanations I ask about who is going or not, and it appears that all the members here are going to go, except for the director, who insists that “It’s good for them”, but she has to work, much to my surprise as during our last encounter she had been very insistent to get a recently deceased boy’s mother to come along to similar meetings, arguing that “We are Palestinians. We have resistance in our culture”. The ambience on the way remains very light, as most of the participants I am walking with are joking or having mundane discussions. We arrive at a crossroad situated under the stairs and window of UNRWA camp service officer’s office. Several persons are waiting. In total, there are 21 persons in the gathering during its “pinnacle”, which is the public statement, a vast majority of these people are women and, as it turned out during the rest of the fieldwork, come either from Najdeh or Bayt Atfal As-Sumud, another important Palestinian NGO in the camp. Other persons present include two important contacts of Najdeh: the head of the local DFLP section, and Bassam, both of whom are identified as party members and remain at the back of the group. Since the streets are small and clustered, this gathering does take almost half of the space, despite the fact that the participants are lining up against a wall in a configuration close to that of a group picture (in fact, several members do start taking pictures).

The placards are distributed to people in the crowd and the participants remain silent at first. After the placards are put on display, several passers-by join the crowd, but most people keep on doing their daily routines. The arrival of a sweets vendor and his carriage, in particular, causes a certain problem as people have to entirely move aside to give him enough space to manoeuvre. Some workers from the nearby UNRWA clinic come out in the street to witness what is happening as well, which quickly gives a feeling of crowdedness in a very small street. After several minutes of waiting, one woman, Samira, who later identified as one of the gathering’s organisers, steps forward to read a proclamation in a relative silence. Samira has lived in Burj al-Barajneh, on her own testimony, for the last 20 years, after having lived in the Bekkaa, in Tyre, in al-Rashidiyeh camp, and after that Beirut, Shatila, Burj al-Barajneh, Mar Elias, and other places. She works in social work, especially the question of women, in

association with the Palestinian Union of Women. Translated a posteriori from Samira's notes, the declaration states as follows:

In presence of the honourable general director for management
Via the honourable central director in Lebanon, and the director of the sanitary services of the Burj al-Barajneh.

We, from the popular and democratic Palestinian organisation "Nada", march respectfully and gather in this sit-in in your presence in order to present to you our demands, and most particularly concerning the difficult conditions of which our camp suffers. These are foremost the augmentation of deceases resulting mostly from the state of the electricity networks, and the augmentation of the number of our sons who are victims of these. Our camp suffers also from the many houses collapsing which, falling on their owners, lead to many wounds. And these are not the only problems, to which are added the ordeal of sickness and accessing treatment, and the moral and physical charges that weigh on the sick and their family. This is without speaking of the question of the infrastructure and their many problems, of the flooding of the roads and the common leak of rainwater into the houses.

Facing this reality, we demand, from you and your donors, humanitarian associations and groups of support to the Palestinian refugees, to act quickly by taking into account the following demands:

Most urgently, we demand a program for the rehabilitation of all dilapidated buildings and those in bad condition.

A work seeking the extension of the electricity networks as well as making safe the existing ones, which are a threat to our children.

An increase of UNRWA's contribution to the treatment of serious diseases, up to 80% of the hospital fees and 100% of the treatment.

Taking into account the problem of infrastructure via the maintenance of the sewage networks and mainly the manholes which cause flooding in the streets.

Stopping the integration of the Palestinians from Syria to the classrooms, as this leads to an increase of dropouts and a getting astray from the programs.

Figure 21: Declaration made by Samira, January 2015

The formal tone of the text has to do with Samira's experience with parties, but clashes with the image she tries to convey of a spontaneous, popular, and spontaneous gathering:

Well the first thing is that we just told to the people, there is going to be a gathering. We tell them for instance on Thursday and so forth. We distribute papers in some houses

Prospectus?

Yes yes. Sometimes by just discussing it, and sometimes if they pass in the centre, and sometimes in the mosque. So the first thing was that we didn't really have to organise the demonstration. Of course we decided what is it that we demand, do a list, what do we need from the camp director that never arrived. For the director of the camp we did a letter, we went to the direction of the district, and at that direction we give it. So it says we did not receive that, this thing for instance didn't arrive. And we tell it to the direction.

You've been talking to people in the street, the centres, did you get problems with the direction, or then parties? Because these are political problems, no?

No no, this is a general problem. That's how we talk about it. Now we sometimes, for instance me sometimes, I make like a small talk. For instance in my neighbourhood, all of us we will talk and say there are problems, this one and this one and this one and this one, what do you suggest? If they start getting to the idea that maybe we should do a demonstration, that we should make a petition, you see? Because we are in the same neighbourhood, so someone will maybe come and tell us look, a certain woman is dead, because of a fever. She caught a fever and she died. So we need to make a movement, because someone has been widowed. (Samira, Burj al-Barajneh, February 2015)

The organisation of the gathering consisted in smoothing down its partisan but overall organisational aspects. The very name was put in opposition to partisan "demonstrations". What was at stake was the presentation of a collective identity rooted in the familiar, private experiences and the close-knittedness of community. This did not prevent the presence of a number of institutional actors, such as a DFLP PC member. Nevertheless the identities built into the event rejected these identifications. When returning with participants on the causes of the event, this aspect of spontaneity, very coherent with the familiar grammar, was central:

Maybe it's the feeling, you know, maybe I got involved in this gathering because I witnessed tragedies related to these issues such as the infrastructure. If you see a house collapsing, the feeling of it marks you. (Jamila, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

Well the problem of the infrastructure for instance is well known by everyone in the camp, for instance. Everybody knows that. Everybody has the same problem, and everybody in Najdeh knows it. This problem is very old. Very old. All people here know that. (Badia, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

Political it means demands on the question of earth, of the return, of the rights of the Palestinian people and what it wants, the relation with international, Arab nationalism, all of that is political. The social it means the problems of the camp. That's all. [She laughs] The camp, what is its problems, we see that and we work to improve its condition. And what we do the main thing is social work.

And for you political problems are not...

It's two things you must not mix. They don't mix. I mean I have the demands of the camp, seriously the demands of the camp, here, there are so many of these demands. That we need to solve. And that's the work of the associations, and it also has an impact. (Samira, Burj al-Barajneh, February 2015)

After the declaration, a group of participants make their way to the office in order to meet with the director, who turns out to be absent. Several jokes are yelled, such as "He's fled before us when he heard we would come!", and the group starts shouting slogans, such as "Director, open the office!". After five minutes of shouting, several groups of people have joined the scene. More doctors went out of the clinic, and a group of children coming back from school start mocking the demonstration, shouting "The People demands the opening of the office!", mimicking the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutionary slogans, laughing. Nobody seems particularly annoyed by the ambience, and conversations open in the group regarding how UNRWA rarely listens to the people's claims. Some participants, including Samira, enters the clinic, and it is explained to me that it is to meet with some sick people who are being treated inside. We proceed to return to Najdeh's office, the entire gathering has lasted for about half an hour. In the office, the various participants return to their everyday tasks, but we are quickly joined by other participants, among which Samira.

- The PYN meetings (From FD, March – April 2015)

I have been invited to Shatila by members of the PYN for a “gathering” (*iğtimā*). I assume it will be a demonstration, as the term is the same as the one used in Najdeh. I am taken to the Children and Youth Centre, a building on one of the only squares in the camp. The gathering turns out to be in fact a debate, and I have a hard time at first understanding who called it; later on it will appear that the debate is situated in the on-going campaign by the PYN to document the “problems of the camps” and was the object of a prior agreement with the PCs. Similar meetings have already taken place and have been called by some participants “The local committee” (*al-lijneh al-ahlieh*), in reference to the PCs, but also to the short-lived “independent” PC elected in 2005.

The debate has already begun. The Centre, both because of its location and out of use, has always been presented as a sort of neutral space in the camp (partly because the square in front of it is scarce in the camp and therefore used a lot). The room is a wide and empty space and 43 persons – including me – of which 4 are women, are sitting on plastic chairs in a circle. Although supporting pillars cut the lines of sights, most of the assembly is therefore constantly visible to everyone. Around the door, as I come in, a small pack of young men are gathered. The ambience is tense and many people speak at the same time.

The member accompanying me explains that every party is represented, pointing to a group of older men occupying more or less a third of the circle. Nothing identifies them as officials, although some of them are wearing suits and ties. The debate is already rather tense on topics of water and electricity. As time passes this heated ambience only increases. What is being discussed, as I understand with Latifa’s help (I did not know her before), is related to the constant issues with the infrastructure and provision of services. Contrarily to other meetings the register of interlocution is marked by proximity. At first this is mostly through names, people calling one another “my uncle” or “my daughter”, but also later through claims of collective identity: “We are the sons of the camps!”, “We are the camp’s youth!”, “I’ve lived in the camp since I am 15 and I am workless!”, and so forth. When I ask Latifa about that she explains that there may be some people affiliated with parties in the room but as most people she came as such: “Yes I come for a social organisation, but right here I am a daughter of the camp”. Some of these people were there on several formal or informal meetings I went to

with the PYN, and met with Mansour in particular. Others I have met as party or association representatives on several occasions, although they do not claim it here.

The local leader of the Islamic Jihad, for example, explains that “Yes, I am from a party, but here to speak to you about these issues, I want to talk mostly as a son of the camp”. The other party-members follow the same line of speech when they express themselves, but while when the members of the PYN follow it, they are applauded, the party and PC members are subjected to criticism when they do.

Similar meetings with similar ambiences were held in the following weeks. This ambience was maintained during a later meeting of the *local committee*, this time in Ahlam Laji’s office. On several occasions attempts by members of the PCs to assert authority leads to vocal criticism, in particular when one of the members questions the assembly on the presence in the debate of married women, implying that this form of “disturbing” behaviour does not fit them, or insisting on the idea that the floods and power shortages described are largely exaggerated. The group of younger men gathered by the door are particularly clearly expressing their disagreement, by interrupting them, questioning their presence or pretention to talk about topics, asking them for example how often they come to the camps, or leaving the room when they talk. After a long testimony on his daily life and the hardship he faces, one of them, getting particularly angry, interrupts one the PC members’ starting answer, asking what they ever did about that, accompanying the sentence by an unambiguously provocative chin tilt, before leaving the room. Returning to this event with participants, the tension was not described as a failure, on the contrary:

L: We’ve had people suffering from all problems. And they must talk about *lijneh sha’bieh* because they have not a suitable time to face, to talk face-to-face about *lijneh sha’bieh* with people here, okay, you understand about what I mean? So this meeting was very positive, because we got to the first step to let people meet *lijneh sha’bieh*. (...) Everything completed each other, from the meetings on Sunday to this meeting, also the meetings with Pursue, everything completed each other, okay? So, that’s why we make people meet *lijneh sha’bieh* here. (Samir and Latifa, Shatila, April 2015)

Two members of the PYN from Shatila take the floor to convince the PC members that there is in fact a problem of water floods, which the latter say they doubt even though a part of the audience has been accumulating testimonies. They evoked a survey they have made which shows that Shatila is subjected to this issue. One person explains that the whole problem comes from the lack of action from the PCs, and suggests that people turned to the other PC to solve that problem. “What we need is a single PC, I know that in Burj al-Barajneh they have only one PC now and they solved the problem”, says a person.

Although it is worth noting that the physical layout of the meetings varied, the meetings’ dramaturgy varied very little. As the conversation unfolded, discussion led to more heated exchanges between the camp dwellers and in particular representatives of the PCs who were asked to account for the situation and the multiplication of personal anecdotes. The emotion was a part of what was sought by the organisers, the debates being planned around the organisation of anger, from objective and neutral-looking statements of facts to interjections. This served a “rise in generality” from the camp dwellers, toward the enunciation of a general problem and attribution of responsibility by pointing the incapacity of the factions and PCs to solve the problem. The meetings generally ended in an extremely conflictive ambience, and were followed by the distribution of the documents produced by the PYN in their campaign “Apply your system!”.

These events marked the translation from the register of expertise employed in the “Awareness raising” meetings organised by the network and the political discourse carried by it, and the occasion to move from one register to the other through a careful administration of the proof. For the members and cadres of the organisation this dimension was relatively clear, and mobilising the “problems of the camps” was presented as a way to reach the political:

Our goal is not doing the electricity or the water. This is the means of doing a good governance in the camps. We are helping the governance. We are not in our work, it’s not to solve the issue of electricity, the issue of electricity when we work this is a means to improve the governance in the camps, and stability of course. (Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014)

After the meetings the ambience was generally tense between the participants and the PC representatives, but the PYN members were always satisfied, insisting that the goal was to channel the camps’ dwellers’ voices, and on the necessity to voice problems. The meetings

took the appearance of a scene in which the PYN's framings of the PCs as inefficient, unconnected bodies were being confronted and adapted to other representations, especially the PCs' attempts to relegitimise themselves. During these moments, the PYN members managed to impose through various resources their definition of the real, "winning" a symbolic battle against the partisan actors.

Self-help as contention? Two boundary cases

Beyond this small number of openly-disruptive events, another range of behaviours can be approached, which appeared as means of conducting public denunciation by the mobilisation of a different register of practices, particularly self-help. Self-help was observable as a form of trial by space to diffuse and stabilise the problem of the camps as a legitimate framing. Such was the case, for example, of the PYN's urban works through which the organisation rendered visible and comprehensible to the camp's population its criticism of the PCs' incapacity to act efficiently. Self-help could also be conceived as a mode of action in itself, and contribute to the forging of collective identities described earlier. If self-help could be a part of a broader repertoire, as in the PYN's case, it could also be described as a repertoire of its own.

- The creation of Markaz al-Naqab

Creating a community centre was, for Markaz al-Naqab's members, a way to "anchor the action" into a concrete and local form, but also to propose an alternative to dominant NGO models. NGOs described by most activists as the very thing they aimed at not being, particularly because of funding.

A: We gathered in the camp. Myself, and others as well. There was no support, there was not a support from such faction, or such movement. We were our own support.

So what did you do?

AS: We undertook some projects. The projects were small, but they were big for their scale. We started cleaning, in the camp, picking up the garbage. After a while we also started collecting clothes. And we would distribute them to the Palestinian-Syrians. After all of this we organised a small party, and the goal with that party was to get some money. (Aziz and Abu Sufian, Burj al-Barajneh, April 2015)

This was the common story among the group and was regularly repeated to me as I discussed with different members on its origins. The origins of the group were employed to make a point on its difference from the NGO model. Markaz al-Naqab's members made a strong point of insisting on their community anchoring and on the fact that their activities were not motivated by receiving money from donors on pre-established programmes, but on taking a grassroots approach to their action. Al-Naqab's work consisted of "working, and after we did the work trying to get some money, not starting by looking for money", explained Abu Sufian in this interview. "When we started Ma'an," said Aziz, "we donated the funds from our own money. Every month we paid \$5 to make our thing, our financial support, from us, and we are very happy and know where this money go". In a video published on the centre's web page (Markaz al-Naqab, 2016), the organisation is presented following the same narrative, opening with a statement by Edward Said, according to which "The only thing [Palestinians] have not tried is relying on [themselves]", and highlighting how the centre's independent origins and funding allows it to provide more comprehensively for the camps' youth. One of the founders explains how the project's main asset and objective was to have a space "to work in [the camp] while remaining independent, without pressure from anyone", leading to a call for financial support, to remain independent from both donors and parties.

This discourse in itself was comprehended and employed as a denunciation. The activists made clear that their actions, diffusing a national culture among the youth, elevating competences, and providing a space for thought, were a means to answer the failings not only of the partisan organisations, but also the NGOs. While most of the organisations I met, at the exception of the parties, used the nationalist framework in a careful way, relating it to specific activities but legitimating their everyday actions by employing terms finding their meaning in the associational grammar, Abu Sufian insisted that "Our politics is not the politics of factionalism, but the politics of the liberation of Palestine. And the centre works in the direction of liberating Palestine". This was particularly the case with the undertaking of

cultural activities: “If I teach *Feddayin* [the Palestinian anthem] to one kid, I have worked toward the liberation of Palestine”, explained Aziz.

The centre aimed at contesting through giving the example of an alternative. This transpired through the organisation of classes, school support, painting activities, but also conferences on parts of the Palestinian transnational mobilisation, in particular by contributing to Nakba Week, especially by inviting Leila Khaled to a conference on the values of resistance in Palestinian culture and society, and by organising a workshop sensitising people to the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions campaign, among other events. These events were inscribed by the group in a discourse which framed them as participating in the nationalist agenda, while detaching them from factionalism and the dominant forms of associationalism.

- Painting in Shatila

At the end of the fieldwork, in 2016, Tariq suddenly asked me if I had ever had the occasion to meet with Amira, who was a grassroots activist from the camp. He proposed to introduce us to one another, saying that what she was doing was very similar to the Cash for Work project, and that she was one of the persons who did good things for the camp. We therefore proceeded to walk toward the streets where she could usually be found. When we met her Amira was shooting a film for an association. Amira was a young student in mass communication and journalism, having been a member of different associations, particularly in children and youth activities. Prior to these, she also participated in a number of demonstrations and gatherings on the “problems of the camp”: “I did a lot of *muḏāharat* and *i’tiṣām*, with every person from the camp, I visited a lot of homes saying we have a demonstration, because of electricity, because of safety, because, because, because”. The reason for which Amira was known by my other informants was nonetheless her action in the camp’s space, especially the form of self-help: “I have activities in the camps, mostly in the subject of cleaning, to clean the walls, the branches, land, etc. I started by painting the walls. I wanted to paint all walls and branches in Shatila camp. (...) When I feel I am free or I have time, I do this and now, I’m thinking to do another activity, recycling garbage. (...) Everything I can do can be done I believe from community to community” (Amira, Shatila,

April 2016) . Beyond these proposals, she organised self-help actions such as collecting garbage, but also the maintenance of electrical networks, independently from associations. She insisted on the communitarian dimension of what she did. Amira's engagements began along with a group of friends with a growing feeling of dispossession and uncleanness of the camp's public space:

[As a child] I didn't think... but every time and every day, I see some changes to bad, not to better. So I feel, and I try to change. (...) From my house, I'm meeting people from my house, and I start doing activities, from my house, also with associations, and I, uh, spread in Shatila, with people. (...) I was sitting, like now. And I look at the wall. Why was it [graffiti] written in, uh, in the wall, so I decided, I will paint on Shatila camp. And at the same time I opened my telephone and wrote on my Facebook and a group in Whatsapp called Shatila News, I explained how I will do this, and people became very happy, and my friends told me we will help you, five of my friends, all the same they come and paint with me. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

Like several other camp dwellers undertaking self-help actions, Amira insisted on the willingness to carry a discourse on the camp through her actions. When asked to explain what she aimed to do through them, she preferred insisting on the fact that she meant for an alternative discourse on Shatila to be defended. In Amira's discourse, contrary to other activists encountered, the main goal was to bring justice to the camp, going against the miserabilist, but also securitarian narratives she had been confronted with. Equally important was the connection she made between the camp and Lebanon, rejecting almost entirely the refugee/host divide which remained as a structuring dynamic in most other interviews and discourses. Amira presented her initiatives mostly through the familiar framework, highlighting the familiar connection to the camp in particular as a part of the Lebanese society, in relation to her own father, studies, and situation as an economically advantaged educated woman having grown up in a refugee camp:

In Shatila camp the mind is closed. They don't like the women to communicate with men, etc. But my family and my dad have an open mind, so he agreed, he didn't reject it. What I think and what I do. (...) I like to... I'm a journalist, and I have read a lot of things, a lot of bad things from outside, so if try to change this *nazra*, that looking, from the outside, so I'm doing something different. I hide some quoted, bad quotes, from the walls, and I tell the people

outside, Shatila is not miserable, and everybody is afraid, no, Shatila is a place full of love, full of people, friendly, lovely... and safe place. Because a lot of people write very bad things. In every place. I'm going outside and I know. A lot of people are afraid of coming in Shatila camp. But the talents inside Shatila are famous, and the people have more courage and *tshaja'u* [take courage]. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

This form of engagement, just like that from Markaz al-Naqab, was not restricted to the mere willingness to act in the camp, but with a broader expression of disappointment toward the camp's situation, especially in terms of their political management. Amira was presenting what she was doing in continuity with what she presented as a generalised corruption and incapacity to answer the people's concerns from the parties, factions, and PCs. The failings from these institutions came in her discourse from the camp dwellers' passivity, which she aimed at tackling by the model of an action "from the community to the community". The attachment to space, mediated by an emotional register but also from the social capacity to draw on a local legitimacy anchored in a long presence in the camp and the relative notability acquired by her father as a "person of good reputation" in the camp: "I love Shatila camp. I love the people. I love... the eyes, the friendliness of Shatila people. All people from Shatila know me, and love me, and this is what I need. (...) I want to change Shatila because I love Shatila and I want to stay in Shatila. I... I don't like, I don't want to leave, but I want to... to stay here and, I want Shatila camp to become better".

Amira as well as Markaz al-Naqab's members rooted their action in a familiar grammar of interaction. As such they resembles the "intellectuals of the margins" described by Amanda Dias (Dias 2013), as they draw on autochthony and a variety of local engagements to propose not only the expression of a collective problem with a responsible actor and victim, but also a certain way to politicise it. These experiences do not constitute cases of a "new", "radical", or "alternative" mode of "resistance", as they are located at the margins of the political. Besides, the effect of the sociological investigation, which encourages the expression of coherence and strategy *a posteriori*. But we can keep these cases in the scope of the approach, not seeing them as a questioning, but on the contrary as a continuation of other, more classical, forms of mobilisation, interacting with them, constituting a continuation of contentious dynamics, by other means.

Demobilising, remobilising, transforming actions

The picture presented here would be incomplete without taking into account the actions' temporality, as collective careers (Becker 1998). Returning to the field after a relatively long period was the occasion to observe how the dynamics which had been witnessed during the first period of observation had been changes. In May 2015, at the end of the first period of fieldwork, what I was expecting was to observe a number of trajectories of development, or at least the maintaining, of contentious trajectories. The PYN was, as it has been described here, increasingly managing to form a civic coalition around the denunciation of the "problems of the camps", and presenting a more direct discourse, while reflections in Najdeh were arising after the sequence of small-scale mobilisations, but also of discussion and debate within the organisation, around what would eventually become the Cash for Work project. In the meantime, Markaz al-Naqab was continuing to develop a "renewed" nationalist agenda by the organisation of events installing in place the themes of the Palestinian revolution and resistance, trying to establish a connection between the transnational Palestinian movement and local actions in Burj al-Barajneh.

In the following months, the perceived structure of opportunities changed. In April 2015 the finding in Saida's Palestinian camp of Ain al-Hilweh of the body of a Lebanese citizen suspected to be close to the Hezbollah's Resistance Brigade (Zaatari 2015a) led to an increase of tensions. Those concerned different groups within the camp. Hezbollah, but also the Palestinian security forces and political parties, the Lebanese armed forces, and groups associated with the "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" organisation or approaching its ideology were involved. According to Zaatari, "the situation is the result of an armed outlaw presence that doesn't necessarily fall under the consensus of the Palestinian leadership" (2015b). A notable reaction was the toughening of the army security apparatus concerning the camps, which started with an increased presence at checkpoints around the biggest camps, including Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh, involvement of soldiers, and other decisions, the most spectacular being the construction of a wall around Ain al-Hilweh.

In this context, and despite the organisation of a demonstration by the PYN in Burj al-Barajneh on the issue of garbage (Sogge 2015), public contention became out of date. For the core members of the PYN, in Shatila in particular, but also in Pursue's offices in Mar Elias,

the order of emergencies changed toward Ain al-Hilweh. This period was coincidental with an increase of tensions for the organisation's members, who had to redirect their efforts to maintain security for the publics they related to in the camp, but also could not afford a frontal opposition to PCs. Interrogated in the second period of fieldwork about the decision to suspend the "Tabiq Nizâmak" campaign, one of the PYN's core members was manifest about this situation: "It was not possible anymore... because of the situation. The PCs also were getting tense, and it was not good. So we did not do it anymore" (Fadi, April 2016). Nonetheless this event was not lived as a demobilisation as much as a change of actions by the organisation, which redirected its efforts toward small-scale, furtive contentious actions (Taylor 1989). Several months later, once again, the situation had changed: during Summer 2017, the death from an electric shock of a young man living in Burj al-Barajneh caused a form of remobilisation, and demonstrations took place in the camp, openly denouncing the PCs.

This was not the only change of orientation observed by returning to the field. The case of the Cash for Work campaign is equally as interesting. In 2015, around the end of the field trip, the creation of a test project for Najdeh around the idea of garbage collection was being proposed by one of the association's activists, under a model very close to the one presented in the case of Amira's painting activities. In interview, this proposal was presented as a small-scale activity, mostly oriented at "doing good for the streets" of the camp, especially that of Marwan, the idea's main proponent (Marwan, Shatila, January 2015). A bit less than a year later, the project had developed, becoming Najdeh's most heavily-funded project. The target audience had equally changed, from Palestinian-Lebanese native from the camp to Palestinian-Syrians under the supervision of Palestinian-Lebanese. Besides, the organisation was now receiving substantial funding from the Swiss organisation HEKS. In return, nonetheless, the establishment and development of the project was, for a number of participants, including in particular Tariq, a mode of socialisation in the camp and of notabilisation. After a few months of functioning, Tariq and his colleagues were getting increasingly included in a number of small-scale political events, in the forms of transactional support characterising the political relations in the camp, approached by partisan actors, and participating in sit-ins organised in association with the "problems of the camp".

Conceiving of the studied organisations through the temporal sequences they are inscribed in allows us to return to our original question in this chapter. I have described how a considerable amount of social and militant work went into maintaining social discontent on the “problems of the camps”. We can also see here that the observed processes of politicisation are not unequivocal. The system of social constraints described earlier playing a role of enabler as well as impeacher of action, tactical “moves”, either predictable or not, have an effect on what the others will do and the trajectory their actions will take. In that aspect, as I have described earlier, we see that the apolitical is not an opposite as much as a composite of the political, as withdrawing from the political or attempting to depoliticise an action or a situation can very much participate to a political action. This second section has therefore attempted to show a model of contentious action, following a theatrical analogy, as happening essentially in place, and drawing its meaning essentially from it. What mattered, for the actors, was not to stick to a specific model of idealised contentious politics, or in fact to the sector of contentious politics at all, but to undertake the action which would the most efficiently allow them to interact collectively in public and obtain a form of ascent in framing the situation, a public denunciation, and therefore the solutions to be put in place.

III. Conclusion of the chapter:

This chapter's aim was to describe the process by which, in the constrained model of public expression I have put in place previously, the expression of the local as a political problem takes place. I have attempted to explore in particular the content to be given to the concept of *trial by space*, using the classical themes of the sociology of public problems and its pragmatic reformulations. What transpires from this analysis is a particular focus on localised competences of public expression, but also the fact that the “problems of the camps” do not exist in a vacuum, but in relation to a universe of social problems which can be seen as in competition with them. A particularly important dimension of reading the production of social problems through the prism of space is to re-evaluate the importance of the production of material and symbolic social devices which matter neither purely in material, nor purely in intellectual terms, but in a representational domain which encompasses both dimensions. Problematising space allows a clearer perception of what exactly is at stake in the constitution of a category of localised social problems, far from a form of scientific populism for which said problems exist transparently, as a pretext for a broader critique of the social world, or as “needs” to be fulfilled by an adequate allocation of resources. There is not an objective “laundry list” of what is or not political (Eliasoph 1990). There are, instead, processes of politicisation.

The question of contention has been posed in continuation of this argument, employing a model of public denunciation drawing once again from pragmatic literature and trying to make sense of contentious action in place. Using this framework, we can see how the repertoires of actions employed by organisations which relation to the political is complex, as presented in Chapter 2 have to be adapted to the form of representation of the self in public space they attempt to construct.

If the approach so far has related to space, it has mostly been as a constraining context and, in last instance, as an explanation to the observed phenomena. Nonetheless as it has been posed in the theoretical discussion of this thesis, space is as much a producer as a product of the observed social interaction. Therefore, my last chapter will effectuate a return to the space of the camps, to describe how these dynamics play back into the production of space.

Chapter 4: “Return to space”: collective action and space production

Learning to figure out my own way around the camps’ space was both a frustrating and an educative experience. The apparent urban maze had, as any urban area, to be learnt. Not being able to rely on practice, I had no choice but to regularly ask for directions, either from the persons I was going to meet or from passers-by. A part of the literature had led me to construct mental maps of the camps as spaces charged with symbols and political representations, but the fieldwork questioned this representation. While I was expecting to find a space signposted with references to tragic or heroic memories of Palestine, the revolution, and the Civil War, the described reality of the camps was much more mundane. Although asking about the national geographies of Palestine in the camps brought answers, they appeared as a form of tradition which was acknowledged, but rarely practised, by my informants. Giving indications or discussing, the informants would rather refer to NGOs and associations’ offices, shops, and occasionally houses, rather than nationalist topologies. Interviews and interactions did not condemn or reject the nationalist topologies as much as they casually ignored them, preferring others. These denominations were accompanied by the much broader density of space, in terms of content, that has been described in Chapter 1.

How to locate the camps in a grander order of things also became increasingly relevant. After my departure in May 2015, demonstrations started in Beirut’s streets protesting a garbage crisis. The main slogans were calling upon a change of government, and the garbage crisis was used as a symbol of the inadequacy of government in Lebanon. Having no opportunity to return to Lebanon, I could only witness the events from a frustrating distance. The “You Stink” movement, as it came to be named by most European media, was structured around the very topic of garbage I had been discussing with activists in the camps for the previous few months, and I was eager to observe the same conflict taking a different scale entirely. Assuming that the news would be of essential interest for activists who I had seen talking and thinking about similar issues for the past months at least, I contacted Taha to enquire about “the current situation in Lebanon”, but the exchange surprisingly did not revolve around the

expected topic. Instead, we ended up discussing “the events” on-going in the Southern camp of Ain el-Hilweh at the same time, and especially his worries regarding “These things they call Islamic”. In fact, the Palestinian camp dwellers had been keeping aside from the “You Stink” movement, and kept apart from it.

There had been a few events resembling You Stink, motivated by activists of the PYN, in particular one demonstration in Burj al-Barajneh which had been described as in continuity of the movement (Sogge 2015), but these had been short-lived and, as we have discussed earlier, reverted to other, more consensual, actions. After my return to the field this was confirmed by others: while the conflict in and around Ain el-Hilweh was regularly evoked in discussions, the “You Stink” movement was never mentioned by the camp dwellers. Although You Stink did not focus on the camps, its existence could have formed an opportunity for similar actions in the camps, but did not. As often, the reality of the behaviours was contradicting my expectations. Part of this error was of course caused by my own excessive romanticism toward the Beiruti urban social movement. Besides, having to come and go between Ain el-Hilweh and Beirut and therefore focusing about the Southern camp a lot, my interlocutor simply thought about it more than about what went on in the capital’s center. There may also have been a link with the particular way the PYN produced a certain perception of spaces and their relations, of which space it was relevant to relate to when thinking about activism. In other words, the specific scale of his engagement could explain his answer.

In this Chapter, I will explore a dynamic of “return to space”. By this expression I mean to try showing how collective action was not merely anchored in space, but produced it. Space forms the constraining and enabling structure allowing the activists’ actions. They also influence it, participating in its incremental transformation and reproduction. I will at first attach myself to the question of the production of scale: far from being a simple process of increase of the reach of any collective action, I will show how scale-work corresponds to the production of a relevant geometry of time and space, to an “order of things” institutionalised in the camps. The activities through which this order of things is constituted and imposed will be described. In a second part, I will focus on place, defined under the terms of humanistic

geography⁴⁰, and focus on the perception of the camps. The activists produce particular meanings and subjectivities; they are not only influenced by those.

I. A system of camps: translocal geographies and the camps

The relation between Taha and what happened in Ain el-Hilweh in the introductory anecdote made sense retrospectively, considering the social reality of the Palestinian camps as opposed to the refugees' relation to the city as a whole. It makes sense, when considering space in relations, that proximity to the city of Beirut mattered less to him than another camp, even more remote. Making sense of this in geographic terms demands to look at the question of scales.

Maintaining of a specific scale of the camps demanded much more than mere socialisation, and implied on the side of the organisations a considerable amount of what we could call scale-work: by their organisation of the recurrent interactions of activists coming from different places, the organisations were reproducing a certain relation between these places, i.e. a specific translocal scale. After a brief return to the notion of translocality, I will show how this notion is useful to describe the particular system of places the camps are included in.

⁴⁰ By which I refer to the trend of human geography focusing on "people's relations with nature, their geographical behaviour as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place", as defined by Yi-Fu Tuan (1976).

A. Translocality between place and scale

Although I did not systematically investigate this topic, the number of camp dwellers encountered who explained having never lived in another place and, a fortiori, another camp from the one where we met at the moment of the statement was very low. On the contrary, their trajectories included many places, including in particular the other camps, from where they could come, regularly go for social, political, or professional reasons, parts of the city these camps were included in, and so forth. Besides, they also extended this mobility to themselves and relatives they had to other countries entirely, in more or less clear projections of the future be it Palestine under the principle of return, or as refugees in the United States of America, Canada, Sweden, Germany, or other countries. While the transnational mobility of the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon has been the object of past investigation, in particular in Dorai's work (2006, 2011), the translocal dimension of camp spatiality has rarely been the object of discussion, either because it was not questioned or because of the specific chosen method of investigation, generally long monographs realised in a single camp.

For extremely instructive as it is, this latter method has its own effects as it reinforces a reading of the camps' spatiality as somewhat insular, as if no intermediary scale appeared between the transnational imagined geography of Palestine in exile or diaspora and the local dynamics of the camp itself. Working in different camps made clearer that conceiving the camps as isolated spatial units is insufficient to apprehend the phenomena taking place in them. As locales, and from their emergence, the camps were integrated in broader urban units at different scales, such as neighbourhoods, municipalities, agglomerations, the Lebanese state, but also more broadly the state of the Palestinian people in exile, etc. At the same time we have seen how the camps worked as places of their own right, and how a great number of observed phenomena could be interpreted through their specific locatedness: by the production of a local spatial arrangement of streets, buildings, events, public problems, landscapes, and so forth, the urban meaning of the camps were being defined locally in an ensemble of broader spatial systems.

A number of contributions since the 1990s have increasingly focused on this specific dimension of placeness in relation to other places, in particular in relation with Massey's conception of place as void of any purely local definition of place (1994, 2005). For Massey,

the divide between space and place is conceptually questionable, as places cannot exist outside of space, the system of relations between them: “Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent” (1994). This perspective had weight in discussions around the concept of translocality. This approach allows, as I will discuss, a more complex description of the camps. In this first sub-section I will be defining the concept of the translocal in the use I intend to make of it. Indeed, if the transnational has been extensively employed and defined, the concept of the translocal, although common, remains defined in unclear and sometimes contradictory manners.

Translocality and transnationalism

The concept of translocality emerges in the study of migration and as a critique of a nationalist and bounded approach to space. For Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, “Translocality refers to the multiplicity of local spaces and actors and their interrelationships in a global world. (...) These assemblages do not fall into neat categories such as the national or the global. (...) These spaces are translocal because they both transgress and transcend locality and have the ability to change the local spaces from which they emerge. Translocality thus marks a shift from nation state based formations of identity and its relationships with territory and political authority” (Banerjee 2011). In this agenda, translocalism and transnationalism are in effect, as discussed by Katherine Brickell and Arona Datta (2011), somewhat parallel agendas: in the development in the 1990s of a transnational research agenda, calls for an interest in the boundedness of transnational phenomena led to the interpretation of a “grounded transnationalism”: “Research on transnationalism became more nuanced and sophisticated through attention to situatedness, by articulating a notion of translocality that was based on local-local connections across national boundaries” (Brickell and Datta 2011). The concepts aimed at showing how the relevant locales for experience were not necessarily those directly experienced in place, but always via a network of interconnected locales.

As such the concept carried a part of normativity, especially in Arjun Appadurai's work, which insists on its aim in developing a scientific critique of nation-state based approaches and an overly localised definition of locality (1990, 1993, 2003, 2010). Indeed for the author the concept also aims at criticising a locally bounded approach of locality, and he intends to distance himself from a spatial description of locality, which he differentiates from "neighbourhood", what we could call the material space (2003). In this approach the concept allows approaching in particular the relationship to place which emerges in situations of migration or exile, such as in Divya Tolia-Kelly's work on the distinct relationship to the Lake District emerging from migrant populations: "For both groups, their translocality stems from their local emplacement along with various relationships with landscapes abroad" (2008). Brickell and Datta explain how, although necessary in a context of an under-conceptualised spatial boundedness of anthropology, Appadurai's approach was of use, but was opposed with Katharine Mitchell's argument in favour of locatedness and against excessive passion for "hybridity" (1997). Therefore, as the authors insist, translocality appears as having to be located at the intersection between two other concepts, those of place and scale, which is the material and social location of relevant contexts and at the same time the general spatial economy in which these contexts themselves are located.

Translocality between place and scale

Once the distance established with transnationalism and the importance of spatiality reasserted, translocality appears as a much more practical tool as the concept allows at the same time a reflexion on place and scale, which the concept of transnationalism, questioning the national scale as essential in international relations but maintaining its centrality, does to a lesser extent. The concept of translocality allows, in this comprehension, to move the focus to "local-local connections in their own right" (Brickell and Datta 2011). Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein identify it as well as a mean to "interpret multiple scales of identity not only in the vertical terms of a scale-hierarchy (i.e. local-regional-national-global), but also in the horizontal terms of multiple locales or multiple regions of identity. Translocality therefore does not necessarily impose a hierarchical rendering of scale-relations, making it possible to articulate conceptions of scale alternative to those imposed by, for example, the state, capital,

or powerful interests” (Oakes and Shein 2006). Therefore the interest is not merely to interpret what goes on between locations, but also what symbolic and social order this is included in. Translocality does not only allow approaching questions of mobility and the influence of contexts onto each other from the actors’ perspective, but it also allows approaching the ways in which these actors have to make do with a number of spatial delimitations and relations of power – scales – which appear to them as given, and participate in producing others. Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak (2013) describe how the concept of translocality emerged in literature to reconcile place-based approaches with notions of mobility and scale, focusing on social actors as spatial agents: “authors use translocality to capture complex social-spatial interactions in a holistic, actor-oriented and multi-dimensional understanding”. In the case of social movements, for McFarlane, the concept allows the identification of an effect which goes beyond the mere networking of several locales: “Sites in translocal assemblages have more depth than the notion of ‘node’ or ‘point’ suggests (as connoted by network) in terms of their histories, the labour required to produce them, and their inevitable capacity to exceed the connections between other groups or places in the movement” (2009). A translocal assemblage is not a “network” of places, meanings and representations do not only “circulate” from one point to another; specific meanings and representations are produced, which are distinct from the local ones. Banerjee, argues that “These spaces [of mobilisation] are translocal because they both transgress and transcend locality and have the ability to change the local spaces from which they emerge” (2011).

I refer to translocality as a system of interaction rather than, for instance a spatial representation. Translocality is the situation in which what happens in a place comes to matter in another place, without being associated to a bigger scale including these different places. This definition is particularly potent in the way Olivier Grojean looks at the Kurdish movement in Europe, as an extended system of interdependency which “cannot be assimilated to the aggregation or the juxtaposition of the various sites of interaction and each local site must be comprehended as producing at the same time the particular and the general” (2008:51). Translocality in this approach presents a triple interest for research. At first it allows interrogating the relationship between place and scale. More specifically it provides a scope to question how, through specific interactions located and anchored in space, scale

relations are being negotiated and constructed. Second, it provides a framework through which we can approach the relations of power between actors: mobilising different locales can and does provide actors with resources in their interactions, especially in conflict, as has been explored via Kathrin Sikkink's "boomerang effect" (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Third, translocality does at the same time allow us to look at how certain forms of generality impose themselves more or less depending on processes of "scale-jumping". On that point we can follow Massey's argument that the opposition between a "concrete local" and an "abstract global" is flawed (1994), and consider it as erroneous in analysis as she considers it in theorising. In a similar manner a common mistake consists in associating the politicisation of a situation with its rise in scale or in "size", and the ability of the actors engaged in it to detach it from its local conditions of emergence. The focus proposed by pragmatic researchers has shown how the process of rise in generality could on the contrary be opposed to a process of rise in scale: "Here the rise in generality occurs not by the addition of cumulated effects but implies switching to the delimited, singularised, local dimension of nature" (Trom 1999). It does not rely on a spatial rise in generality (toward a broader reference). Therefore we must define a way of approaching scalar relations which would elude this mistaken association: "local-particular/global-general".

B. Things happening elsewhere: situating the camps in scale

The camps do not exist isolated from other places, and as such are embedded into relations of scales. Scale in geography is never merely a point of observation, but is in relation to power as "the nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size" (Delaney and Leitner 1997). Considered as marginalised spaces in the Lebanese state, as a pinpoint for the Palestinian transnational movement and revolution, as places of suffering, hope, or memory during a conflict, as recipients of international support, or as parts of a global diasporic space, the camps are generally situated in some form or another of such power hierarchy, the most notable of which being the Palestinian national spatial geometry. Jaber for example discusses the revolutionary period in the camps as a "displacement in Lebanon of the geopolitical centre of the Palestinian question" (2002). From the creation of the PLO onwards, especially during the revolutionary period of the late 1960s until the early 1980s, as we have seen, the PLO played an essential role in moulding the various refugee populations as a nation in exile: "It

was a time when the poetics and politics of place coincided: the spatial, albeit imaginary, boundaries of the camps henceforth invoked a constellation of political meanings, primarily the right of return, now positioned at the core of the national narrative. The camp as icon of the nation became central to the Palestinian imaginary” (Farah 2009). We can see a first essential scalar framework emerge, centred around the Palestinian nation, in which the camps are the spaces of representation of exile, and the containers of a maintained Palestinian-ness, drawing from rural Palestine in particular (Peteet 2005:111–13).

It matters importantly to insist here that a scale is not, in geographical terms, merely a point of view to estimate the relation, for example, between a map’s dimensions and the world it attempts to describe. Scalarity refers to the universe, the “geometry of power” (Massey 1992), in which the situation is inscribed. Scale, as explained by Byron Miller, “should not be taken as an external ‘given’ in social conflict. It is always simultaneously part of social struggle, ‘the object as well as the resolution of the contest’” (Miller 2000). Scale is always imbued with valuation, both vertically (what degree of generality is at stake) and horizontally (what symbolic universe are we inscribed in). This plural aspect must therefore be explicated, while not falling into the impression of a freely-defined, always-changing, fluid, and unbounded apprehension of the concept: scale is relevant insofar as it highlights real relations, whether mediated or unmediated, between places. These relations do not originate from the stuff of imagination, but from actual encounters, and actual relations of power between actors located in different places.

Studies have rarely if ever located themselves at the crossings of several such scales and the effects of this location have been the object of little discussion. Ramadan, through his interrogation of the visual political landscape of the camps, opened this reflexion by showing how on the contrary different landscapes inserting the camps in different scales were confronting each other in these places (2009a), in relation with their own neuralgic centres and margins: Mandatory Palestine for the PLO nationalist landscape, for example, or Al-Aqsa in the Palestinian Islamic landscape, marking a continuity with the rest of the Muslim symbolic places. Increasingly, as showed by Doraï (2006:206–11), the relevant spatial geometries of the camps came to encompass places like Sweden, especially because of the prolongation of the socio-economic networks via the emigrants’ remittances sent back to Lebanon along with communication in the broader sense of the term. The same could be said

of a global scale of aid and relief, in which the camps were de facto included by the international NGOs and state-owned development programmes and funds present in the camps. We see the scalar dimension of the system of interaction we had evoked in Chapter 1 re-emerge in such a description.

A plurality of scales: locating the camps

Similarly to what has been described regarding the landscapes, the informants located the camps and themselves at the crossing of a plurality of relevant scales, which varied depending on the situations and led them to mobilise various actors, places, and sets of social representations. The inclusion in the Lebanese state and its territory was the first of the various scalar systems the camps were included in, by the very effect of their location and of their relation to the host country, but also to the host cities and municipalities. As parts of the municipalities, the camps were relatively close to the Lebanese areas in their direct proximity – at the exception of Mar Elias camp, in particular. As pointed out by Meier the concrete conditions of living as well as the appearance, density, and overall state of both areas are often similar (Meier 2008). In these perceptions, the camps were included almost ordinarily in the rest of the city, as marginalised areas. The interpenetration between the camps and the city was equally visible in terms of who lived in the camps: despite their denomination as “Palestinian”, the camps hosted a broad range of people who did not belong to the Palestinian refugees, especially poorer Lebanese renting in the camps because of the low rents, but also Syrian refugees, Palestinian-Syrians, and other categories of expatriates coming from Asia or Africa: “The house rent in the refugee camps is lower than in other places, especially compared to central Beirut where accommodation is expensive, hence attracts poor, new migrants (Sudanese, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, etc.). The fact that security forces do not enter the camps is an advantage to undocumented migrants who feel more protected from eviction” (Doraï 2011). The same phenomenon was at the same period occurring in other parts of the city, which were being invested by the same populations and for the same reasons:

I didn't have this issue or problem about where I'm going to live or get married and have my own house, and now as I get old as I see that there are many building that are high, very high, eight floors or nine floors in the camp, and it's something new. It's something that clearly is trying to change the character of the camp. As you see we're very similar to Dahieh or the suburbs, or Beirut, you see people living outside the camp as we are living in the camp in these houses. (Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

Taken in this perspective, we can see emerge a number of behaviours and representations which inscribe the camps in the urban systems they are located in spatially. In the case of the members of the PYN in Shatila, for example, moments of leisure were marked by this inscription in the Beirut municipality: after having gone to the basketball field located near the camp but in the Lebanese part of the city, on the occasion in March 2015 evoked in Chapter 2, Nada, Yassir, and their friends were taking me to the various locations in Beirut which marked an ordinary weekend for a group of people their age and accompanied by children: we visited the nearby park and swings, and then took a bus to Hamra (in central Beirut), walking our way down the Corniche following a path I usually took on my own walks in the city during the weekend, while I playfully asked one member of the group to give me the Arabic translation for things we saw in the street, giving them the names in French. All of this was done while we were walking toward one of the Corniche's cafés where they considered going for glasses of juice. At a moment in this afternoon, Yassir told me, as we happened to be separated from the others, of the importance of getting out of the camps, and get to parts of the city with "more space".

A similar reflection was made by Marwan, after a planned visit of "his" Shatila. The visit was quick and restricted to most of the bigger axes of the camp, taking place after he left his work at the organisation. After the visit, nonetheless, Marwan insisted that we went together outside the camp with friends of him and to a café he was used to going to with them, while he waited for his university classes to begin. The café was similar to many such places in the city, very different from the generally crowded and half-open ones that could be found in the camp. The young men were casually chatting, asking me the usual questions about my origins, what my thesis was about, and why I chose to do it; as Marwan explained, when I asked why we were going to this rather distant café instead of one of the many we could find in the camp, that he felt that he needed to get out of the camp where "everybody knows you all the time", where it

was impossible to meet with girls, and that the camp's environment was not good to be in all the time. Besides, insisted Marwan, the café we were in was conveniently located near the university, which was more practical. Such slices of mundane life come as no surprise if one considers how the camps are also included in the city of Beirut as "regular" neighbourhoods, which were mostly identifiable not as Palestinian camps, but as poor areas of a city, without a particular impression of rupture between them and the rest of the city. In these moments, as in several others during the field work, the reality of the camps was somewhat suspended, as observed by Nicolas Puig (2012).

Taking a different perspective on the same daily life led to seeing another type of spatial geometry emerge entirely, which included the camps, both physically and symbolically, in a broad archipelago of places linked to the Palestinian nation, both in exile and not. The first dimension of this form of scalarity was the presence in the camps of the offices and centres of Palestinian parties and organisations, of course, as well as the remaining Palestinian memory in itself. The presence of organisations such as Bayt Atfal Assumud, Najdeh, the DFLP, or Fateh participated in linking the camps to Palestine, and the most important contributors to this were perhaps the village associations, which had been formed by members of the different villages during the exile, through their efforts to gather along the lines of sociability and geographical proximity prior to the exile, and which have served as a means of maintaining this specific form of sociability:

The name and some memories, some villages are so big, and some are small or medium, that's the difference. (...) I mean, we can't be like Tarshiha, the difference in that and Kuwaykat is how big it is. Kuwaykat has a dozen families, but Tarshiha is more successful than Kuwaykat in the strength of the group, they have strong leaders, and the youth. Kuwaykat has no youth, because we have a mukhtar, so we suffer from the mukhtar who talks and he's the boss. And as Palestinian you should listen to him. (...)

You for instance what are your relation with your village?

I try with some youth from a village to make a, to make it [he pauses] connexion with the village in Palestine, we make many things, we have a Skype, between the village, and we try to make like a place we go from Lebanon and from Palestine, in the past we went to Jordan, from Lebanon we have from the village, Kuwaykat and from Palestine and we meet in Jordan,

and we try to make it like every year, and we talked on Skype usually. (Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

The unspoken part of the interview here is that among Kuwaikat and Tarshiha, the first has been destroyed after the *Nakba* (Khalidi, Elmusa, and Khalidi 2006), and barely exists physically anymore in Palestine, while the second now exists as a Palestinian town in the Israeli territory. Nonetheless through the maintaining of their names and through the protracted experience of the refugees in Jordan and Lebanon the places maintain some form of reality, which emerges when he talks of having Skype exchanges “between the village” when talking about groups whose family was exiled from the same village, or in prejudices existing between the villages (Kuwaykat is less successful than Tarshiha, for example), despite these divisions being less vivid with time and the densification of the camps, as well as the increased residential mobility of the refugees themselves.

The relation to Palestine can, in that aspect, be understood in the type of spatial geometry, or scale, which emerges from the work of the Palestinian national liberation movement: the cultural and memorial engagements started under the revolutionary period have been maintained and were present in most educational and national works observed in the field. In my observations, offices such as Najdeh’s or the PYN’s, for example, but also private houses and most public locations in the camps, were charged with the Palestinian national landscape: representations of strong symbols attached to the experience of exile, in particular the keys to the lost homes in Palestine, famously kept by refugees in symbol of their future return, the maps of Palestine, insisting on the Arabic toponyms which have been and continue to be replaced with Hebrew ones, representations of Handhala, of Al-Aqsa, of the dove, of olive trees, of fake carved stone walls reminding of the rural architecture prior to exile, are here to spatially anchor something which is equally as present in representational terms. The organisation of events such as Nakba Week of Land Day, but also, in its more religiously-imbued versions, during the month of Ramadan the marches for the liberation of Palestine and denunciations of the practices of the Israeli state associated with collective ceremonies of *iftar* and prayers (Bakr, December 2014), showed how important this form of inscription of the camps and their population in a different spatial order of things was (FD, May 2015). Periods of regain of tension in Gaza or the West Bank saw regularly marches and demonstrations occurring, in reaction not to a Lebanese agenda, but to a properly Palestinian one. For Bakr,

the relationship between the camp, engagement, and Palestine, was important:

I try to be a man in Fateh but an open man in all the movement. Because my most important thing is the camp. If the camp are good, so Palestine is more closer from us.

When was that?

In school, in the Intifada, 2000. I was the one who make many activities to the Intifada, like to ESCUA, like in this school, we tried to make a new image of Palestine in the Intifada, that not all the Palestinians are fighters. But the Palestinians fight because we have not another choice. But we're not like, we don't like the gunners. We want to fight in the pen, fight in the music, fight on how to make the Palestinians have a good life.

So the Intifada was an important moment

Yes. Jenine! Jenine, it's special, in Jenine, we show how the Palestinian youth fight till the death. And we show how Israel kills our people, Israel kills our kids. Like Muhammad Dura, we want to say to the world that the Palestinian people fight to peace. But Israel they don't want peace with the Palestinians so if we don't have peace of course people go to fight (Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

The reference to Jenine illustrates how, in the remembrance of the moment of opposition with the Israeli armed forces, Bakr mobilises a different spatial order. When Bakr associates himself as part of the “we”, evoking the conflict between the Jenine camp and the Israeli forces in 2002, during what has been one of the most noticed camp sieges of the 2002 Intifada, he does of course not refer to a personal participation to the fighting in Jenine. The “we” he chooses to inscribe himself is distant but real, as he is locating his experience of the demonstrations in the Lebanese camps at this period within the extended system of actions – to borrow the expression to Grojean – of the Palestinian nationalist movement. As parts of the Palestinian diasporic space, the relation between the camps becomes in this case more meaningful than the relations between the camps and their direct, non-Palestinian, surroundings. This kind of relation takes more meaning when looking at the sort of mobilisations occurring when an event concerning the Palestinian diaspora leads to actions in

the Lebanese camps⁴¹.

These two examples do not intend to cover the entire range of scales which can be identified from the camps' perspective, but aim at giving a concrete dimension to the concept, illustrating how through social and political relations, different ensembles of relevant concepts – i.e. different scales – came to matter for interactions in the camps. Moving from a local scale in which the camp is located as a marginalised part of the city, to a diasporic one in which the camp can be apprehended as a part of a scattered national whole, constituted one of these “scale jumps” we are trying to identify when taking the concept into account.

What is going on where: situating the social, changing, and jumping scale

The presence of the camps in different scalar systems was especially relevant in interviews around the “problems of the camps”. Locating what was going on was insufficient in itself: part of the denunciational process described in Chapter 3 involved identifying the broader scalar system in which this identification came to make sense, either as a means to strengthen or to avoid a denunciation. The topic of water was, perhaps, the most sensitive to such changes in scalar identification by the actors, because of the situation of water overall in Beirut, where due to excessive pumping from the groundwater and bad infrastructure, a part of pumped water has been polluted by sea water: “The excessive exploitation of ground water over the years has led to the infiltration of seawater and the deterioration of the fresh water aquifer” (Korfali and Jurdi 2009), leading to an increase in water shops. A similar situation was observable in the camps:

In the camp the water, God bless, is salty. This is an issue you have had the occasion to see for yourself. Ourselves, as PC, are dependent upon the employees of the company managing the network and upon this management in the area. For the potable water we now have a project

⁴¹ Such demonstrations leave few traces in the media, but some have on occasion been filmed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsglZZXWfgw>-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3pq1W80LIc>).

Beyond Bakr, other interviewees, such as Amira, Kader, and Taha, evoked the importance of demonstrations in support of Gaza in 2002 and 2009 in particular.

by the Swiss Development Council, for the softening of salty water. (...) So that closes it, as far as the water goes. (Burj al-Barajneh's PLO PC, May 2015)

The work about the salty water, this is a normal phenomenon, something related to not... not... related to all Lebanon, not an exception in Shatila, but all the country, inside Shatila and outside Shatila are suffering about this. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

These two quotes give an example, coming from two very differently situated actors, of an agreement on how to situate a commonly acknowledged issue: in both cases the fact that the provision of salty water is a problem for a part of the population is not denied, but insisting on the scalar system in which the camp is included in this perspective – the Beirut municipality – serves to re-inscribe this problematic situation within a form of normality, or at least to evacuate its specificity as far as the camps are concerned.

The same cannot be said of the following excerpt, on the same issue, which presents the urban situation of the camp, and in particular the water, as an effect of the specific history of the camps in general, and Shatila camp itself:

The first thing is the infrastructure, this is your interest, the infrastructure was better, it was more clean, there was the electricity for instance, the water, the buildings, the buildings Alex, the buildings were not like now, very, very vertical, and all the houses were lower and it was not narrow like now. For instance our house, we lived in the first floor, my grandfather maybe in the second, my uncle in the ground, so M., also the others, every family have their own house, own building, about two, three floors maybe. Now you see, and the health condition, most important the families were present. In Shatila everyone was together. Few families from Shatila now live in Shatila.

So what has changed between that period and now?

Now the first thing is that the shape of the camp is now different. The health conditions also. The infrastructure, the people as well, there are many strangers in the camp. And the services, also. The services of UNRWA, for instance on education or instruction. All these things were better before.

Why has it changed? Why did it go from a good to a bad situation?

Because the camp, in the camp, there is no effort. The PLO, the effort is now divided in three groups. These three main groups in charge of the camps in Lebanon are the Lebanese state, the PLO, and UNRWA. These groups have their own role. The government never did its part. The PLO and UNRWA have many functions in the camp since a long time but they don't do things anymore. And the people has changed as well and this has influence in terms of their needs. For instance someone who lived outside will come to live in the camp now. People come and this renders the situation harder. They come because living in the camp is cheaper and it is the only solution they have. The economic situation also has become worse for the families of the camp. The people who stayed in the camps, did it because they didn't have a choice. (Badia, January 2015, Shatila)

A part of the difficulty to enounce the situation in clear terms could be found in this multiplicity of potentially mobilised scalar systems in which the political problems had to be located. Jumping scales also permitted, during the interviews, to compare the situation with other places, showing the abnormal character of the described problem. In the course of an interaction with the researcher, representations had to be clarified, which did not need to be in the course of common interaction, along with the consequent parts which “go without saying”. But there was more to it than that: by scaling events in a specific way, and attaching them to a specific spatial geometry, the relevant actors, frames, and representations were being imposed as the discussion unfolded: “jumping scales may be conceptualized as a political strategy of shifting between spaces of engagement, which may be broader or narrower than spaces of dependence in any particular instance” (Jones 1998). In interviews such phenomena could be perceived occasionally:

The refugee camps, as a territory, are they part of the Palestinian nation?

No of course not, we are under the Lebanese law, under the Lebanese authority, so it is not part of the Palestinian nation. But from a cultural point of view, yes we are part of the Palestinian nation. From a political, I mean political commitment, we are part of the Palestinian nation, but from a geographical point of view, we are part of Lebanon. (Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014)

We don't have any political goals. Every youth, every young boy here, in our camp, wants to help, wants to give anything for our community. So here we give, as you say, many refuges for Syrian refugees. I can help them. And I can make myself better. (Marwan, Shatila, January

2015)

Now we focus on the camps cause Palestine is still far. We focus to make change in the camp especially for the people. Especially for human, like to get some rights, like work, like [pause] study, things that the people in the camps are suffering from, because they are in Lebanon. (Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

The identification of the adequate scale at which to situate one's action varies depending on the social order and justification one mobilises. More than scale-jumping, we observe here attempts to situate the adequate order of things in which to locate the camps, as one is talking. I will now discuss the way this order of things is located through social interaction.

C. Constructing and practicing translocality: the case of the PYN

Returning to the opening consideration of this section regarding how for certain activists in certain situations more distant places become more local or more relevant than closer ones, I aim in this last sub-part to highlight how a specific group, through its practice and as a tactic, inscribed itself in a form of translocality which in return constrained it. I rely more specifically on the case of the PYN, as this particular organisation can serve as a good example. Indeed as I will develop, translocality was part of the group's ideology and strategy. We have already discussed the ways in which during the debates described in Chapter Three, the reference to other camps served as a particularly important device for the raise in generality and to strengthen the activists' claims in front of authorities. In everyday conversations, similar references were often made, usually through comparisons: the "problems of the camps" were often associated with those of other camps or their absence in the same camps, to highlight the broad dimension they had. Comparing between camps played a role in framing denunciations.

The PYN functioned, like several other organisations, at several different scales, among which the translocal, anchoring its actions at the same time in particular places comprehended as such, and at the level set by the organisation itself. When asked to present his work, Mansour, the main member of the PYN, was insistent on displaying this dimension:

When we were discussing internally the criteria, where we do, what to do with it, so we agreed to make a big consultation meetings with all the stakeholders in the 12 camps, factions, PCs, NGOs, figures from the community. So in 9 months we did 500 consultation meeting. In these meetings we came out with a list of needs, from all the camps, and then we executed 24 open meeting to decide the priorities. Now we have a list of 500 projects, but which one we chose first. So we have another meeting with all the stakeholders to decide about the priorities, where to start. (...) So this is the way we work. We succeeded in executing 25 projects in the 12 camps within a period of 4 months. It was electricity, water, environment, different projects. This is the reason why I have the knowledge of the problems in general. (Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014)

Mansour's description illustrates the way the PYN can be understood as translocal: the organisation was at the same time anchored locally and producing local problems, and generalising them at the scale of the organisation, which gave it an advantage in its interaction with other actors. While the organisation's universe of representations was situated at the scale of all the Lebanese camps as a whole (Mansour insisting on his apprehension of "the problems in general"), the group's actions, on the contrary, remained defined in local terms. The PYN did not, for example, choose to propose consultation at the national level, but on similar issues at the local one. This conferred the PYN members the main advantage of being multipositioned. This perception of the organisation's locale is what I aim to interrogate here: by describing the way in which the organisation inscribed itself spatially, we can apprehend how scale matters in situation.

The translocal scale in everyday practice

Situating things in this way was not self-evident when one considers the origins of the group, which according to its members was always very local. Structuring themselves among the PYN, the various local groups had to work to create a relevant scale. This translocal scale was also attached to the form and the history of the organisation, which had emerged as a network of local associations, or at least conceived itself as such. Translocality was not a trick of the perception, or a discourse: the PYN, through its activity, has delimited a specific "level" of reality at which it and the members which participated in it "located" themselves.

This inclusion allows understanding how interactions are played out. Translocality was at first experienced by the PYN activists through the practice of the organisation itself, inscribing itself as “obvious” in the group through the multiplication of training workshops in particular.

These workshops were organised in Beirut and were one of the main services provided by Mansour’s company to the network. They consisted of various forms of trainings and occasions to share experiences, but foremost served as occasions of sociability between the members of the network. Between the members who came from organisations in Shatila, Burj al-Barajneh, but also Baddawi or Ain el-Hilweh, the impression of being involved in a network would have been marginal without these events. They also served as forms of encouragement for activists who otherwise could feel marginal and lonely: certain groups, at the time of the investigation, comprised only a handful of permanent members. Such was the case, for example, for Burj al-Barajneh’s group, which consisted of a loose network of people around two permanent members. In this situation, explained Yazid, maintaining an activity would be politically and economically difficult. For him the situation of the camp dwellers was at least depressing on a daily basis:

You wake up in the morning, you go to work or to look for some work, there is no electricity, bad water, you must find a little... resources to go through the day, and how do you want to think about Palestine in this state? (...) The camp it’s a space of... like, naked space. It’s unable for you to manage yourself. (Yazid, Mar Elias, March 2015)

At the local scale the situation of PYN activists could often be marked by discouragement and anguish of that nature: we have talked about the career of PYN activists and the continuation which was found in most of them between partisan engagement and activism. When evoked, the history of the activists made often reference to the sensation of immobility linked both to their history within the partisan organisations, and later from the outside of these organisations. This perception could be in some cases employed as a means of motivation for the members. In the year 2015, a documentary made about the members of the PYN in Shatila and their educational programme relied on a very confrontational framing, one of the founding members asking with defiance what the parties, which “put a lot of pressure on [them]” were going to do for the 500 children following the programme, concluding “they cannot do anything against us. It’s all a matter of provocation” (Laurent 2015). Yet in

everyday conversations this defiant attitude was also accompanied by doubt and fatigue. The PYN formed a reassuring structure by giving these activists the possibility of scaling their actions up and at a level at which their isolation appeared much less important:

The PYN was born of small initiatives from within the camps after the entry of the army in the Nahr el-Barid camp. What we had were small initiatives, social initiatives, starting in some camps and then expanding into others, because the situation was the same. The same essential problems were found in all the camps, their situation was the same. (...) The thing is that people often are a little afraid from the political judgements. (Yazid, Mar Elias, March 2015)

For the organisation, framing its action at a meaningful, encouraging, translocal scale was therefore essential. This was done in particular through the management of sociability within the group. As in the case described by Verta Taylor (1989), continuity between relations of comradeship and friendship were essential to both maintain the group and keep it tied together, and construct its translocal anchoring. On February 2015, a marking event was organised illustrating this continuity when the PYN organised an internal football tournament close to Burj al-Barajneh, on a football field located alongside Tariq al-Matar. According to Yazid and Taha, the event was the first of that scale organised by the organisation, as all the groups had been invited. The teams – which did not always count the usual eleven players – represented Burj al-Barajneh, Rashiddiyeh, Nahr el-Barid, Baddawi, Shatila, and Ain el-Hilweh. In total the attendance counted a total of approximately fifty people including those not playing in the tournament. Beside the playing field itself was a broad terrace on which a small stall selling drinks and snacks was installed in front of plastic tables and chairs protected from the sun by umbrellas bearing drinks brands. This was where most of the non-players gathered during the games, when they were not watching. In particular, Mansour was slightly on the sidelines, smoking and discussing with several persons and groups of persons during the afternoon. Overall the tournament was a moment of enjoyment and fun, during which the group's hierarchies were symbolically set aside: "The ambience is playful and the power relations between core members, organisers, and cadres is set aside somewhat: Taha, who took the position of goal keeper for the Baddawi team is especially joked about and mocked by other members" (FD, February 2015). The occasion was indeed, as insisted upon by several of the members present, more than a mere football game, and was acknowledged by most as the occasion to regroup and fortify the personal bonds between members. A

quickly-drawn map on the encounter allows us to identify three main “loci of interaction” during the afternoon (Fig 22).

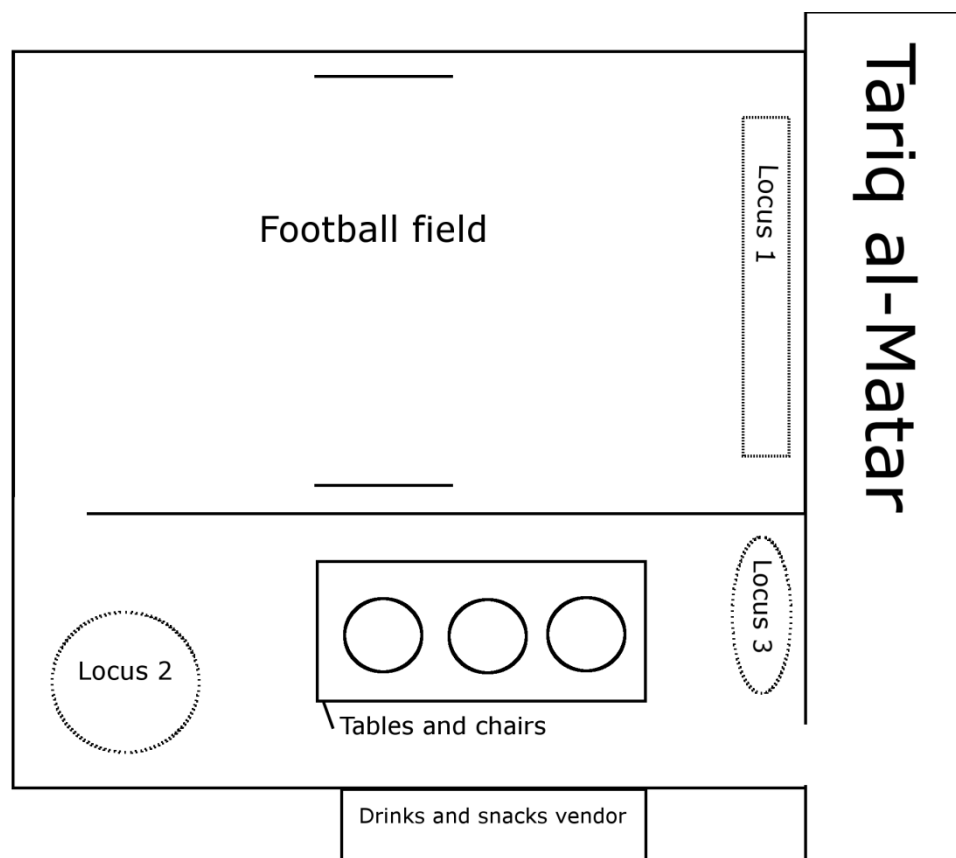


Figure 22: Interaction around a football game (FD, February 2015)

In the space represented, we can see the three loci of interaction identified, which corresponded to the main places where people would gather during the afternoon, beyond the field where the game was being played out. Of course meetings would occur outside of these three main areas, but they were generally short-lived and anecdotal, while these three places

were occupied during the few hours during which the tournament took place:

- Locus 1: The area bordering the field is full of members watching the game and calling on the teams, joking about or cheering such and such moment of play. Some people have put up chairs there. The jokes are mostly about the camps playing at the moment. Several members are particularly picked upon, in particular the “core members” of the PYN. Between games, members interact more or less with others, from other camps.
- Locus 2: During the afternoon, Mansour stayed in this area the entire time, showing little if any interest in the football games. Instead, he spent most of his time talking with chosen members of the PYN, but also other individuals who came and went from the event without staying. Standing, Mansour spent long moments discussing – or, in fact, mostly monologuing – with his interlocutors, never more than two or three of them. Most of the PYN groups’ leaders go talk to Mansour and occasionally are fetched by him and taken aside, as well as an aged man who spends around forty-five minutes discussing with Mansour [Post-edit: This member is subsequently seen in all the PYN meetings at Shatila, among the most vocal in his denunciation of the PCs]. It is difficult to approach the discussions and get the exact meaning of their content. Mansour is nonetheless clearly explaining things or enouncing them in a very convinced manner to each of his interlocutors, who nod in approval, interrupting him occasionally for short sentences.
- Locus 3: A group of youth from Nahr el-Barid explicitly staying aside from the rest of the participants, among themselves, and dressed in regular clothes instead of the sports attire set on by the others. They keep to themselves and converse among themselves, although a slightly tense exchange takes place with Mansour before the afternoon is over.

Once the final game ends, a short “ceremony” around the distribution of a small trophy occurs, including the losing team. The emphasis is put on the importance of staying grouped and on the ways in which the network has been given a concrete existence through this ceremony. Most people are quickly gone, alone or in convoys (FD, February 2015). During the event and in later meetings, participants insist on several dimensions of the events, from their perspective. The members coming from the outside of Beirut, in particular from

Rashiddiyeh and Baddawi, insisted that it was important for them to have a concrete experience of the network, and to get to meet the Beirut members with whom they little regular contact: “We hear of the PYN usually, but here we can see that we are many, it’s very important”, said one participant. Others insisted on the importance of community within the group, but also on the occasion to relate to each other’s experiences (FD, February 2015). Mansour, in a later encounter, was more tactical, explaining how the entire football game’s aim was also to favour discussion and sympathy between activists on ideological terms: “The goal was to make a stronger network, not just to play football, you can understand that”, he explained.

It can be argued that all the interactions described here are hardly anything but local: I have described activists encountering in a bounded area, a game field and its surroundings, which may be covering a few hundred square meters – the field not covering the normed area. On that account every interaction is always local. Nonetheless, the concept of scale provides a clearer apprehension of what was at play in this occasion, which marked one of a continuation of similar meetings anchoring the universe of the PYN members, as PYN members, in something broader than their everyday world. The inclusion of these members, who on a daily basis rarely meet together, into a bigger collective, served the production of this translocal scale. In the meantime, the teams were not composed, and the participants did not compose groups, primarily on divides such as gender, or affinity, or chance, but based on their camps of origins. The PYN’s very organisation kept the two dimensions of local situatedness within a national group of camps as its casual level of existence. Such an event occurred rarely, but on a daily basis the collective which was particularly visible on that occasion remained active: the persons invited to the game also met during workshops, As members of the PYN, they worked at this particular scale, which in return informed their capacity as activists.

Translocality as a frame of mobilisation

Emerging from diverse camps and focusing on different topics, the PYN was for each organisation the occasion to put in common concerns, experience, and methods. For each group and, as the network started being constituted, acting both at a local scale and by referring to the reality of other camps, and importing the focus of other groups was of importance. For Umar, this specificity was precisely what made the PYN's particular advantage:

In Shatila it was more for education with Ahlam Laji', etc. These guys they met and followed workshops and training with Pursue, and they realised that they needed some sort of, like a coordination between the camps to be more efficient. If you're working only in one camp then you are easier to break, so we needed to move to do it national, what was local, to make it national.

The goal was to move to a different level?

The goal was to move to a different level, even if the actions remained local. We wanted to take the local issues, that are everywhere the same, the electricity, UNRWA that deals with the refugees in a wrong way, the PCs, education also, they are the same everywhere. But we organised workshops with Pursue on training, capabilities, local communities, all their skills really, and it was an occasion for the activists to meet and to get together. (Umar, Beirut, April 2015)

This coordination, and the meshing of personal and activism-related activities between the several camps in which the organisation was present contributed to the emergence of the system of camps I have discussed earlier. It contributed as such to producing the spatiality and the scalarity specific to the activists of the PYN. As such, the production of a translocal scale was important for the organisation as it was the dynamic through which coherence in terms of modes of action, of framings, of discourses and representations, and in terms of resources was developed. Essentially, the translocal was the scale of translation of locally-constructed social problems, modes of actions, slogans, and resources into the translocal, giving the group an advantage in its confrontation with the parties and PCs in particular. The example given the most commonly concerned the relation between the Shatila members, whose activities were originally based around the locally-constructed problem of education, and those of other

camps where the groups had originally formed around the question of violence and the presence of weapons, such as in Burj al-Barajneh, or of urban problems, such as in Rashidiyyeh. After several months as members of the network, according to the interviewed members (Taha, Mar Elias, March 2015; Umar, Beirut, April 2015; Fadi, Shatila, April 2016), each group has also adopted those developed in other locales, making them their own in a much shorter time than it had taken for them to emerge in the first locale.

This phenomenon was not restricted to the PYN and could be identified in other groups, such as Najdeh in the development of the Cash for Work programme. As I have discussed the programme emerged during the year 2015 as a trial project under the inspiration of one particular member of the organisation living in Shatila. The project was at first arranged around one precise street and under the argument of showing how it was possible to act upon the problem of garbage at this very small scale, relying in particular on the activists' will to "do some good" for their neighbourhood. The setting of this trial and its success then convinced the organisation to diffuse the action to a broader scope, by including Burj al-Barajneh in the project, through additional funding by the Swiss organisation HEKS. After time, the garbage cleaning project was present in both camps, functioning entirely independently. In particular, the members from each part of the project had barely any contacts with each other, the two teams working separately. The organisational form taken by Najdeh had an important effect of this difference of mechanism: the PYN was an "organisation of organisations" at the local scale, while Najdeh was a pre-existent organisation situated in its own specific scale. The PYN's structure relied on relations of domination between members which did not immediately transpire from the organisation's horizontal aspect, while on the contrary Najdeh's activities were openly hierarchized among the different branches of the organisation. Thus, while the relation of hierarchy existed in the PYN through informal bonds, the existence of a formal structure of decision implied very different relations in Najdeh.

The displacement from a local to a translocal scale was, for the PYN, equally associated with a move to value more certain resources the group's members held, and in particular the technical resources of investigation and presentation of "scientific" proofs: at this scale, mastering the comparison between the different camps and deploying certain realities from a local in another allowed to an extent to counter the domination of other actors' local resources.

In each case we can observe a mechanism of raise in scale at play, from local organisations and actions to broader ones. This "scaling up" of organisations is a phenomenon which has been apprehended on a number of occasions, especially in the case of the transnationalisation of social movements. Christopher Rootes shows for example the dynamics of broadening which, although local action remains important, imposes itself upon activists (2005), as Elsa Beaulieu shows how organisations use "scaling up" to constitute networks on which they can then rely (2007). Nonetheless it has mostly been perceived through the scope of a necessary broadening for social movements. In their account of mechanisms of scale shifting in social movements, Tarrow and McAdam, although they do develop a critical approach on the notion of scale, still maintain a restriction on the notion of scale shifting as always attached to scaling up: "we defined the process of *scale shift* as 'a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to broader contention involving a wider range of actors and bridging their claims and identities'. Essentially, we were talking about the spread of contention beyond its typically localised origins" (Tarrow and McAdam 2005).

In the elaborate mechanism-based model proposed by the authors, the question answered is how we can understand that some scale shifts succeed and others fail. The answer offered relies in the "Dynamics of Contention" framework on an essentially historicised explanation: "Localised collective action spawns broader contention when information concerning the initial action reaches a distant group, which, having defined itself as sufficiently similar to the initial insurgents (*attribution of similarity*), engages in similar action (*emulation*), leading ultimately to *coordinated action* between the two sites" (2005). To a large extent these mechanisms correspond to what has been described in the two described cases. Similarly as in the cases described by the authors, we must also insist on the centrality of social ties and institutions, in one case via the conception of a network, in the other through the investment in an organisation. I want to argue against the idea that "Scale shift is just that – and no more

than that” (Tarrow and McAdam 2005). Pascale Dufour and Renaud Goyer propose to focus not on how social movements “enter” other – broader – scales, but effectively make them: “We can consider that social movement actors make and remake the scales of collective action. With that conceptualisation in mind, the object of the analysis changes: we must interest ourselves to ‘social movements politics’, the activist labour, made of interactions, conflicts, strategies, and discourses, required to produce collective action itself” (2009). In the observed cases, scale shifting was not merely the displacement from the smaller to the bigger scale, but also “sideways”, from an order of generality – a grammar – to another, and from the bigger to the smaller scale.

The various studied groups tended to disprove the idea that scale shifting should be apprehended only insofar as it involves scaling up. The PYN activists never tried generalising their discourses to include them to a “broader” scale such as the Palestinian nation in exile, for example. On the contrary, the characteristic of this scalar position was its inherent locality: in the end, as we have seen in Chapter 3, during confrontations no “scaling-up” took place to inscribe the interaction in the broader camps scale but on the contrary the discussions remained locally bounded. Scale shifting appeared more as a stake in defining the situation than an unavoidable broadening of it: after a few months, the campaign *Tâbiq Nizamak* organised by the PYN, which installed itself on the translocal scale, had been as described earlier withdrawn and the activities of the network turned to more classical forms of local activism and anchoring. Fadi, one of the members of the PYN, justified this decision by the growing tensions in other camps as well as the threat of antagonising the PCs, while insisting that by developing other, more local means of action, such as the conception of the “model street” in the camp, the same goals of denouncing the “problems of the camp” could be maintained (FD, April 2016). What we see in this case is not merely a failure of “scaling up”, but an adaptation by “scaling down” as well, returning to the local, moving from the comparison between camps present in the *Tâbiq Nizamak* campaign, to the establishment of a local framing of the problem, deemed less risky for the activists. Trying to anchor the situation of interaction at a specific scale was as often a matter of the actors’ capacities to make do with what they had more than of a bound process. Scale was neither a given nor a strict matter of choice, but one of the processes of tacit negotiation between actors.

Considering the question of scale allows us to apprehend the question of the relations between camps in a critical way. From the perspective of the organisations, the local was not a world in and of itself, but was always located in specific geometries of power. As we saw, these geometries covered more than a broad versus small divide: the terms in which this broadness and smallness were defined mattered as well, and corresponded once again to social competences anchored in practices. From this perspective the camps appear as a system of places of interaction, anchored in scale and space. As argued by Doreen Massey, place must not be apprehended in an enclosed manner but as traversed by relations with other places and inseparable from these relations. That is not to say that place is merely an object of imagination, but that it can only be entirely apprehended in relation to other places by looking beyond the direct “spatial effects” and incorporating representations to the analysis: the importance or relevance of a place in another place is not an effect of a transparent geographic proximity. What appears as the relevant space for the activists is not merely where they are, but a system of locations which they can interpret and that matter, beyond their material proximity or distance. Besides, through their practice these activists participated in the production of a specific scale. In the final part of this chapter, a similar argument will be made about the space of the camps.

II. Struggle over geographies? Imposing another urban meaning on the camps

When I paint the wall I don't paint because only I want this wall to be beautiful. But I want to change the thinking for children, and all people living inside. So I buy the materials with the money for this society. All people will be thinking "I shared this. I shared this painting. I paid money, X money for this activity". The children act with me, thinking, "I don't want this wall to become dirty, and I will care for this, because I worked on this wall and I feel tired, etc.", and the small children, babies, feel very funny when you put their hands on the wall. So, [hesitates] a lot to clean, and to [hesitates] feel hopeful.

Hopeful?

Yes. Something changes. The Shatila camp will be better, with colours. The colours give happiness, and we'll feel very [she hesitates] nice and think lovely things when we look at the wall. Also I will draw something related to Palestine to spread this thinking on return. And when the small child looks at this location, Yafa, or Haïfa, or many countries, he will learn from the drawings on this wall. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

Identifying what painting meant to Amira in terms of its long-term effects was a part of what made her action interesting: in the given excerpt the particular interaction between the spatial and the social dimension of what she did is presented. In last resort, were these actions merely about solving short-term issues with the electricity, the garbage, the water, or in this case the external aspect of the camps, or as hinted or explicitly stated in several interviews⁴², were they intended to have a longer-lasting effect on the camps, and to anchor political representations in these areas? In Amira's discourse, the relation is thus made between the state of her street's walls and the entire community's way of thinking about its life, its presence into a broader ensemble of spatialised relations, and its political prospects as a whole. Other interviews conversely established a similar link between the camps' cramped

⁴² Particularly Mansour, Mar Elias, November 2014; Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014; Khalila, Beirut, February 2015; Umar, Beirut, February 2015; Yazid, Mar Elias, March 2015; Fadi, Shatila, April 2016.

state, the lack of sunlight and fresh air, and the streets' small size, and a feeling of political despair. In return, taking action for the space of the camps and on the "problems of the camps" meant generally to an extent performing a transformation of this space both in material and symbolic terms: as Amira and her painting, every studied organisation undertook to an extent a marking of the camps' space, anchoring their presence but also their discourses in it. Explicitly or not, willingly or not, through their actions the studied groups had influence on the symbolic geographies of the camps. Their actions partly transformed the repertoire of accessible landscapes described in Chapter One, while at the same time, as I have discussed earlier, tapping into this repertoire. The importance of the influence of social movements on space has been studied to an extent after the Arab Spring movements. In her work on the Place of Change in Sanaa, Anahi Alviso-Marino demonstrates the way in which a space originally devoid of particular symbolic weight – the "Square that was not a square" located on the roundabout in front of Sanaa University – was as the demonstration unfolded charged with such a meaning. This particularly happened through the use of the photographs, described by the author: "Simultaneously, the diffusion of images showing life inside the Square (...) shows the internal construction of the revolution, shaping the space and provoke the necessity to create physical places to display this visual expression" (2016).

A similar phenomenon is observed by Héloïse Nez in the case of the Indignados on Madrid's Puerta Del Sol, the movement having had an important effect on the meaning of space itself, beyond relying on it both tactically and symbolically to express itself (2016). In these contexts as in several others place itself, the way it is apprehended and felt, and the spatial representations and practices attached to it, can become the object of the struggle. Imposing a specific representation on the place where the contention takes place can be an object of the struggle between parties, by a phenomenon of iteration between place as the domain which provides meaning to the actors' dispositions, resources, and activities of framing, and these behaviours slowly transforming place in return. Place once more can be apprehended as much as an influential context as being produced in particular during moments of contention. By appropriating the space of a mobilisation, as explained by Fabrice Ripoll (2005b), a form of "symbolic capital" is produced or appropriated in a struggle. In this final section, I will attempt to close the loop opened with the description of the production of the camps' space to show how this space, is not only what defines, but also a product of social action. By doing

so, I aim to highlight how behind the gross historicisation which has been presented in Chapter 1, we can guess a succession of smaller, less visible, but essential conflicts of the camps as spaces, which delimit their collective identities as a “career”, to rely on the analogy taken by Stéphane Tonnelat to describe “the users’ engagements which made possible the coexistence of different public spaces in a same site” (2016).

A. Considering struggle over the meanings of place: elements of theory

The relation between contention and place-making has been apprehended as interactional by a plurality of authors. As opposed to perspectives according to which the local merely provides a context and content to activism, the ways in which locations are conversely transformed by contention have been the object of interest, at least for two reasons drawing from different theoretical approaches.

The interaction between place and collective action

At first a tradition of geographical analysis, in particular the humanistic tradition, under the influence of Yi-Fu Tuan’s definition of place, has as pointed out earlier imbued the discipline with a particular focus on the symbolic and imagined relations to place. In this approach place is perceived principally through *fields of care*, the networks of relations and emotions humans come to develop with it: “the feel of place gets under our skin in the course of day-to-day contact. The feel of the pavement, the smell of the evening air, and the colour of autumn foliage become, through long acquaintance, extensions of ourselves – not just a stage but a supporting actor of the human drama. (...) In carrying out the daily routines we go regularly from one point to another, following established paths, so that in time a web of nodes and their links is imprinted in our perceptual systems and affects our bodily expectations” (Tuan 1976). Place is a repository of collective representations, which are not merely located in individual imagination, but exist socially. This perspective has had a particular echo in a comprehensive approach which has integrated it through the idea of investigating primarily the interaction between the material and the representational, between meaning and the physical support of it (Gieryn 2000). As Stéphanie Dechezelles and Maurice

Olive argue, social conflicts constitute indeed essential moments which “act as indicators of phenomena which, ordinarily, remain unnoticed because they go without saying. Pushed to convince and justify their cause, actors engaged in contentious activities are driven to unveil practices, formalise grievances, value qualities, rights, and uses, in short to clarify good reasons to act” (2016). Conflicts thus demand a hardening and a clarification of the underlying sense of place. But they also contribute to transforming the relation to place, as they unfold.

A first approach of this phenomenon for social movement scholars has been to point out the relation between collective memory and habits of mobilisation. This has been done in particular in parallel to the approach in terms of repertoires of action. William Sewell insists on how “while insurgent movements make use of the pre-existing meanings of place, they can also – either intentionally or unintentionally – transform the significance of protest locations” (2001). Charles Tilly illustrates this element in his argument on the spatiality of mobilisations in Paris, discussing the relation between topography at a specific moment in time, collective memory, and the spatial aspect of mobilisations later, even as the original topography changed. This is how the author finds in the French Revolution of 1789 the origins for one of the “traditional” marching itineraries in Paris in the 20th century, between Place de la Bastille and Place de la Nation: “That itinerary across the Seine, past the Palais de Justice, and over to the Place de Grève certainly got volunteers to the Hôtel de Ville, but it also symbolized their commitment to a city now in half-open revolt against the king. One day later, on the 14th of July, new streams of activists coursed the streets between the Hôtel de Ville and the Bastille, with enormous consequences for the revolution. Thus standard itineraries come to represent memberships, commitments, and collective claims” (2000). Collective action can influence place and imbue it with its own, specific meanings, through the relation to landmarks and places particularly visible or attached to the political or the state power.

Several studies have shown how this argument could be extended to places which were not particularly linked to the state, but to the mundane and the ordinary. Gunning and Zvi Baron show for example how the practice of public space, through festive events in particular, by providing people with the reassurance of being in a familiar place: in Cairo, “Some likened 25 January to a celebratory march after a victorious football match, involving music, chants and drums. (...) It was the “festival-like spirit that seems to have both attracted and reassured

newcomers” (2014:210). Similar observations have been made in other cases on conflicts focusing on a certain place. In the course of such conflicts, the mundane forms of relating to place are rewritten by the mobilisations’ unfolding. In the case of Shuk-Mei Ku’s work representations of the two piers whose planned destruction were the cause for mobilisation were thus both mobilised and transformed as the conflict occurred: “a folk spirit associated with the Star Ferry pier emerged in the first campaign, with a full-fledged discourse about people’s space later developing as a continuation and extension. In particular, in the second campaign, as the activists found themselves having to confront the colonial and statist history associated with the Queen’s pier, they reconstructed the meaning of the place from the perspective of the people in the dual sense of common folks and citizens” (2012). For Frédéric Barbe, the mobilisation at Notre-Dame-des-Landes is an example of the ways in which localised social movements can be essentially about this procedure of reinterpretation of places when several modes of inhabiting them come to clash, which he divides between *topos* (Lefebvre’s *conceived space*) and *chôra* (Lefebvre’s *lived space*): “To the developer and the visionary elected representative’s mathematized place (*topos*) a great part of the movement substituted, articulated, arranged, and opposed the existential and relational place (*chôra*), often figured in the occupiers’ literature as ‘temporary autonomous zone’ and increasingly ‘Commune’. Inhabiting is thus turned toward the art of being a place’s dweller, indigenous” (Barbe 2016). But once again Barbe’s *chôra* does not merely emerge as ever rooted in the place, but as a result of the struggle over it: the area “is a coproduction between dwellers, occupiers, and visitors” (2016). Collective action and contentious action in and about place is in other words about the production of place as much as it is about the policies which are tackled and confronted during the conflict.

We can on that matter associate the concept of “intellectuals at the margins” forged by Dias with the reflexion that: “intellectuals at the margins do not restrict themselves to reflecting upon their condition: their thoughts come with concrete actions. They create multiple activities oriented toward their localities’ dwellers, to bring them a certain political consciousness” (2013:42). Their work partly consists in reclaiming place and, against a marginalising discourse from the host society, to try to impose an opposite sense of place. The forms of engagement approached by the author in these terms are even more important as they concern the specific modes of action I have presented here. By their action, either willingly or

not, these mobilisations *anchor* discourses and representations in place, contributing to its production and reproduction, and attempt to impose these representations as dominant.

Anchoring: when contention produces place

As contention unfolds, the activists imbue place with meanings of their own, not entirely separated from the local representations on which they were dependent in the first place, but not merely reproducing a local “authenticity”. In their study on Tahrir Square in Egypt’s revolution of 2011, Gunning and Baron describe the same phenomenon as “trial by space” to illustrate how the encampment on the place constituted an attempt to enforce a new, alternative space to the dominant one, and employ it as a demonstration of the possibilities of the movement, making the political claims of the movement concrete: “The vision the protesters had of a different Egypt could only gain traction by producing a public space, in which their values, rather than the values of the regime, were inscribed. Previous protests had in part failed to capture the imagination of the wider population because they had not succeeded in making a sufficiently deep and lasting mark on public space. The capturing and holding of Tahrir (and squares elsewhere) and the production of a new type of space on Tahrir, based on different values, left a mark that is still there, however contested, incomplete and re-inscribed in the period since” (2014:251). In more than one way the phenomenon defined by the authors is related to Guidry’s definition of the concept as it relies on the inscription of an ideology in space in the course of a social movement. While Guidry conceives trial by space as the confrontation between norms and the lived, localised reality in order to facilitate the emergence of a mobilisation, Gunning and Baron consider it as the inscription of the mobilisation’s values into place as a way to impose ideas. In both cases nonetheless the term is employed to describe a temporary phenomenon, which takes place during the mobilisation to dissolve once it is over: “The utopian Egypt in the Square did not last in empirical terms, even if it remains in the minds of those who experienced it. The politics in Tahrir were real, but fleeting, and in their temporary character have become almost a ‘simulacra of [reality]’” (2014:272). In the previous Chapters both of these appreciations of the phenomenon have been discussed, either to show the existence of dedicated places where the organisations’ representations were dominant, or to show the use of space as a device to construct, stabilise, and emphasise problems. But little has been said on the converse effect of mobilisations on

place in the long term: the coexistence of alternative landscapes and grammars of space, in particular, has been taken as a given in the analysis. The opposition is not only between actors but also between spatial grammars implying certain definitions of what the camps are and should be. Therefore, indirectly, conflicts in the camps are also at least partially conflicts on the camps, and for the capacity to determine the dominant spatial representations of the camps.

This phenomenon has been described in other studies, such as in the development of urban renewal projects. Studying the struggle surrounding the renewal of a pier in New York city, Stéphane Tonnelat observed the essential opposition between the promoter's and the users' perspectives on the site, and notices how "the place that users take in these conflicts is rarely taken into account in public debates and research about consultation and urban struggles" (2016). Tonnelat observes that instead of the essential imposition of one of the urban meanings on the other, the urban conflict leads to "negotiations [which] contribute to redefining the institutional and individual perspectives on disputed places" (Tonnelat 2016). The author considers that the renewal of a site can be apprehended through the lens of its career: "Examining the career of an urban space on a relatively long period allows, in this case, analysing the variable engagement of inhabitants in a process of transformation of the urban environment" (2016). As the author shows, the state of the pier he studies is not moulded only by the promoter's projects and the activists' opposition, but also by the uses the dwellers kept on making of it during the duration of the conflict, which he qualifies as "ignored modes of mobilisation" (2016), with much more weight on the eventual result than imagined by the participants to the conflict.

Although we are not confronted with cases of renewal, Tonnelat's case makes an argument for interrogating how the "given" and "obvious" dimension of a place is in fact much more contingent and influenced by a variety of behaviours and small mobilisations. Engaging in collective actions in and around place, the activists mobilise and stabilise spatial representations which they struggle to impose on place. By the very decision of demonstrating in a part of the camp and not another, the choice of specific symbols, the indications they give one another when going about the camps, the places they do and do not go to when realising actions of self-help, as well as the grammars they mobilise to justify these actions, the actors weave a specific discourse of the camps which gains a social dimension with time and

repetition. This process is composed of mundane and almost imperceptible actions, but also by disruptive and visible events aiming at a public visibility. I call *anchoring* the process by which a collective action participates in place-making and, from the mobilisation of place, ends up making such place or transforming it.

B. Palestine in wires and tubes: from the “problems of the camps” to the national liberation struggle

Through their presence, their actions, and their attempts to present themselves and their actions in public space, the activists were on occasion considered or treated as delinquents in this space, at least by the actors whose legitimacy they contested. The presence of the activists was always somewhat precarious indeed, as on the one hand through their engagements, and particularly the associational ones, they fitted into a relatively accepted model of collective action in the camps, but on the other hand their relation with the partisan actors involved not only periods of open conflict and mobilisation, but also as I have described a permanent work of encroaching onto the domain of the partisan actors by other means. Representations of the camps rooted in a nationalist discourse were regularly mobilised and imposed on these actors to sanction this form of “trespassing”. Nonetheless a certain work of anchoring implied tapping into these representations to mobilise them in favour of the activists’ own concerns and modes of action.

Evidently, the interactions around place-making were never explicitly about making place. It was very rare in interviews or other observed interactions for informants to engage about place, simply because it was not the core of their focus at that time. The stakes for the actors were rarely place and its production, but their participation in an association, their desire to improve their lives and the lives of their relatives, the necessities of coping, and so forth. As in many cases place was at the same time a medium and a mediation of social relations, as in the dimensional approach:

We are indeed talking about relations to distances and material frames, about ‘social constructs’ with different and unequally probable social significations and uses. Social ‘actors’ make do – in the two senses of the term – with distance, material frames, and social contexts: they cannot avoid being confronted with them, and they use or try to use them, in the measure of their means. (Ripoll 2013)

Place worked as a mediator of social relations, and is apprehended as such.

The “problems of the camps” and the partisan grammar

The production of place is not an uprooted process which escapes power relations, both in symbolic and material terms, as I have insisted upon in earlier chapters. Marking their presence in the public space of the camps was not for the activists an easy task, because of the competition it implied with actors capable of coercion, either officially or unofficially. Even if, as explained in Chapter 1, one has to look beyond the mere action of the parties and factions in the production of the camps’ landscape, these actors remained, throughout the fieldwork, in a position of domination guaranteed in particular by the anticipation other actors made of their possible reaction, being armed and relatively funded, in particular.

An “excessive” modification of the camps’ space could lead to conflicts with these actors who would then reassert their presence. For example, in March 2016, as the CfW project began to build momentum and the rounds became a habitual event in Shatila, Tariq and his colleagues decided to hang a broad banner labelled with the names of the main donors as well as the organisation’s work. Several other banners of the same sort were hung in the camp’s main streets, especially those where the association had been engaging in renovation and cleaning activities. This specific banner had been hung at one of the main crossroads in the camp, close to the Cash for Work project’s office, which was located a few tens of yards from the banner. Shortly after, the placards had been stripped from the walls or covered by DFLP placards. Indeed the crossroads was also close from a DFLP office. The members of the CfW project did not have particular conflicts, some of them being housed by the party, or being acquainted with some of its members. Asked about this event, members of the CfW project remained elusive, explaining that “these guys like[d] to remind that they are here”, and no new attempt was made to display large banners in this part of the camp. Another similar case concerned

Amira's painting project in its earlier days:

When I paint, I face a lot of problems with a certain party. Not Fateh but, another, other party. We're facing a lot of problems. They say don't paint, where do you get the money, you can't do this, and... why? Because in this way I am changing something more traditional, maybe? Maybe he thinks the babies who grew up in a very dirty camp, when something changes he will not remember anything, and also I (pause) I threw down the posters on the wall, so why didn't you throw this other poster from somebody else, a lot of people who died in Palestine, etc. Yes, but I will solve this problem, thank God. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

The CfW as well as Amira's anecdotes show the importance, and sometimes the sensitivity, the factions can display in public space and the capacity to impose meanings on space. In both cases, the anecdotes describe a sanction following what was felt by the concerned parties as an infraction, and the activists had to a certain extent to adapt to this imposition, avoiding it by withdrawing into more discreet tactics, or changing their practices. Another example was experienced by the Najdeh activists on a different topic, when they attempted to organise a campaign tackling questions of gender-based violence by organising meetings in public space: while in some camps the meetings could be organised without difficulty, in others the defence of the Palestinian camps was employed by partisan actors as a reason to censor the action, as displaying a problem which would potentially resonate with the justifications given to the marginalisation of the Palestinian refugees – their alleged excessive sexual violence – by being given visibility in public space. This opposition between the requirements of the national revolution and feminism has been highlighted in the past, especially by Latte Abdallah's work on honour as a motive in Palestinian nationalism, through the slogans linking "Honour and Land" (*al-irdh wal-'ardh*) (2006). The two orders of valuation – on the one hand, the associational grammar focusing on social problems and the defence of a community, and on the other the partisan grammar valuing the defence of the Palestinian nation in order to liberate Palestine – came into clash, one inevitably incompatible with the other:

There is a norm in Palestinian families that the girls, or the woman, must remain at home in the evening. It is not a rule, it is not forbidden to go out at night, but it's like, it's made a custom. So if they go out it will be considered... they can still go, visit relatives, etc. But it's considered that they should not go out at night. It has been built as a tradition. (...) A part was to meet with the PC. And the denial was there. But for me the PC reflects the community. It is

a PC and it represents the community. Because they represent lots of values and one of them was the mix up of what sexual harassment is. They see it only as rape, and for me it is wrong. We do link it to all the acts, and the first act is only the beginning of a line that leads to rape. But also they're concerned with the image of the camps, which are related, especially by the Lebanese state, to spaces that are dangerous, uncharted and violent, to spaces of mystery, where you don't know what is going on. (Khalila, Beirut, February 2015)

For the activists present in these cases, the particular risk of the situation was to express a criticism while at the same time upholding a particularly performative representation of the space of the camps as that of a national community under threat.

In this perspective the Palestinian national landscape in the camps appeared as a discourse imposed by other actors on the activists, and which they were materially putting in danger, either willingly or not. The activists were not located in front of a transparent space on which they could at will project their representations, but on the contrary often described a feeling of having to make do with what they had, especially regarding the particular form of delinquency – at least, in the representation of the partisan actors – their actions constituted. A number of tactics employed by the groups to avoid such conflicts was precisely to attempt reclaiming this urban discourse in a variety of ways. In the meantime, this reclaiming never told exactly the same story as the one it relied upon, thus enriching or transforming the urban discourse. A first way to look at processes of anchoring as I have defined them lies in looking at the uses made by the activists of the more dominant representations of place, and in particular the representations on the camps as places attached to the Palestinian nation in exile.

From taps to liberation

The space and the time of the camps remained marked by the nationalist landscape, which the activists did not at the same time explicitly reject as much as habitually avoid. Distancing themselves from the “politics”, denying the importance or interest of nationalist events, or criticising the focus given by a number of discourses on the right to return, disadvantaging other topics, was an important aspect of the ways the activists presented themselves. It did nonetheless not deter them from relating to the dominant spatial narrative in

the camps, making these spaces those of the Palestinians as a people in exile, and to identify themselves with the struggle for national liberation by developing interpretations of these actions which fitted this particular narrative. They often related the “problems of the camps” to the Palestinian question as a whole during the interviews:

[In fusha] He who lives in his homeland owns all the aspects of life. And he who does not live in his nation misses all the aspects of life. We need a homeland, we have one but we do not live on it. We need to protect it, and for it to protect us. For it to defend us, as we defend it. To build it and be built by it.

Is what you are doing related to the liberation of Palestine then?

No. No, but we are parts and parcels of this Palestinian problem. We work, within the humanitarian framework only. This does not mean that we are not nationalists, but we are not going to get into politics. Our work is to help those who suffer. We are in a catastrophe, humanitarian catastrophe. (Anwar, Burj al-Barajneh, January 2015)

I would like to answer to that not as Najdeh, but as Badia, I mean. I see that for instance in the general politics, the international politics, the question of return or the question of tawtin, or other things, for the camps they concern the West a lot, Israel and America. And people are hostile to them in the camps. Because slowly... maybe UNRWA in general politics, it is involved, there is a link, and that slowly, it accompanies the diminution of its services. And it starts to stop considering the camps as camps, and this has effects on the Palestinian question, this has effect on the Palestinian status. You know UNRWA was founded in 1948 and the camps are the sign or the exile of the people who are in them. And of course it's obvious that... the diminution, or the restriction of its action and so forth, it leads to a collapse, social collapse in the camps. The PLO, and the problems with the Palestinian state and the divisions with the Hamas, and Fateh, and others, they don't really take care of the services. (Badia, Beirut, January 2015)

From this perspective, the “problems of the camps” could be reconsidered as problems of the Palestinian people in exile as a whole, exile being extended to a condition which imbued the Palestinian society in exile in all aspects of the social life of its members. This aspect of the Palestinian life in exile was already heavily insisted upon by Julie Peteet who explained how “In the atmosphere of displacement and camp life, the relationship between place and identity

was mutually constitutive” (2005:100). During the interviews, the link between misery, marginality, refugee-ness, and the “problems of the camps” came frequently into the argument to highlight the importance given by the interviewees to what appeared as small scale problems:

For us we are working in two parallel lines. The first of them is to work on the bases, and that would be the resistance, the participation to the resistance and liberation of Palestine, and the application of our right. But at the same time, we say that we see the suffering of the people in the camp. Their life. How they live in the camp. And because of that we want to talk about the two. We could call ourselves a political centre, a political centre is here to solve the people’s problems. If you take care of solving the people’s problems it is enough to consider yourself as doing political work. If our goal was to make relief, like the foundations and... then we would not be doing political work. If we merely provided people with water to drink we would not be doing political work. But is the work to provide water or to know how the water can be solved. (...) If I can get the liberation of Palestine of course I want it but I also wish to live. And because of this someone who lives in the camp will think of the problems of living in the camp because you, because he will say I want to return to Palestine and until then I must live abroad. Those are the politics we want to talk about here. (Yazid, Mar Elias, March 2015)

Yazid denounces the distinction between the sort of associational action he participates in, and an apolitical way of doing relief, by linking “small” and “big” problems. The distinction he makes between “solving problems” and “doing relief” lies in this relation to the national liberation, on the basis that the absence of stability at the local scale was preventing the refugees to organise their participation to the national struggle. There was a common, and commonly-shared, representation of a continuum between the “problems of the camps” as a form of “low politics”, and the question of the liberation of Palestine as a global and “high” issue: the interviewed activists presented a continuum between the camps and Palestine, which was a common mode of giving meaning to the space of the camps and more broadly to all practices within it, especially when related to cultural practices such as cooking, decorating, art, and so forth. But at the same time the activists were not simply tapping into a common stock of fixed spatialised representations: they behaved on that matter as Certeauian *users*, who weave ways of action and representation into systems which as a whole escape their control: “These styles of action intervene in a field which regulates them at a first level (for example, at the level of the factory system), but they introduce into it a way of turning it

to their advantage that obeys other rules and constitutes something like a second level interwoven into the first” (De Certeau et al. 2010:51). Anchoring their action into the partisan discourse of place was also a way to establish a link incompatible with another perspective according to which the camps must be maintained as temporary structures, to remind people of the necessity of return, as expressed in Amira’s conflict with the political party, accusing her of trying to impose forgetfulness on the refugees.

Anchoring also relied on the adventitious activities organised by the organisations, and the fusion of associational work, nationalist action, and mobilisation in their actions. Core members of most organisations were included in and invited to most of the nationalist events, and participated on a daily basis in the important nationalist work which characterises the Palestinian NGOs, associations, and parties. The offices were generally full of nationalist representations and evocations of campaigns for the right to return, or the remembrance of Palestine. Generally described as “cultural activities” rather than forms of mobilisations, the presence at such events had an importance as a demonstration of coherence with the nationalist agenda, as well as a way to remind partisan actors of the coherence of the community, beyond oppositions. When in March 2016 the members of the “Cash for Work” project engaged on a sit-in in Shatila demanding an amelioration of the management of the camp by UNRWA, for example, complaining that UNRWA employees did not clean the camp’s streets and public areas often enough, they did so by inviting the PCs, but also by choosing the place where to gather, one of the camp’s entrances generally used for nationalist gatherings. This reappropriation of the nationalist urban discourse could also on occasion serve as a way to criticise it, especially concerning the relation to urban improvement as a deterrent to the mobilisation for return. This was the case of the conception of the “model street” by the PYN in Shatila, containing the representation of the camp as it should or could be according to the activists. Bins had been installed for the garbage, electrical cables bundled, walls plastered and painted, etc. For Fadi, this was a way to express the Palestinian refugees’ capacity for political action, by turning the street into a place of pride, a “capital” in the camp (Fadi, Shatila, April 2016).

This form of anchoring also fits in a universe of representations where Palestine and its liberation appeared as a consensual and non-risky mode of justification in public, especially in front of the partisan actors and external witnesses: as often, in the type of interactions that

interviews constituted, accessible cultural and representational resources such as this inscription in the struggle for national liberation. Nonetheless it is important to stress that this representation was neither obvious nor spontaneous, and emerged from a conflict and a criticism the activists were often confronted with, as stressed in several of the interviews, challenging of what they were doing by other actors, in particular representatives of the parties and PCs. More broadly the idea that the urban improvement of the camps was a step back from the struggle for the liberation of Palestine was present in Lebanon as a whole and, as Daniel Meier showed (2008), included in the consensual rejection of resettlement (*Tawfīn*) in the country. Anchoring their actions into the Palestinian space was therefore a way for the activists to preserve the legitimacy of their presence in the camps, as the interviews showed the activists were conscious of:

We want to go back to Palestine and liberate Palestine. But until we are able to go back I want to live with dignity, I want to live peacefully, I want to live as a human being. This is, the problem is from now until. The right of return should be a joint effort between Palestinians and Lebanese to work toward resolution 194. When they came out with the *tawfīn* word, as if they were making the problem between the Palestinian and Lebanese. The problem is between the Israelis and the Palestinian and Lebanese together. So when they talk about *tawfīn*, the fight it becomes between the Palestinians and Lebanese. Yes we want to return to Palestine, we want to leave Lebanon, especially because our experience here is not so good to be committed for it, but that doesn't mean at all that if I'm saying I want to go back that you will not allow me to live properly, to live in dignity, to have the right to work or to own a property. (Mansour, Mar Elias, March 2015)

Anchoring did therefore not only imply fitting into the nationalist discourse, but also to an extent diverting it by including other actors and actions into it. By a game of questioning and justifying, the collective discourses were remade in a slightly different way, which tolerated actions around the “problems of the camps”. This dimension was less perceptible, of course, in public space, than it was in collective representations and discourses about the camps.

C. Contesting the meanings of the camps: the emergence of alternative urban discourses

A more notable, as well as more incremental, mechanism of anchoring identified in the field was the way in which the activists, along with other actors, participated in the production, reproduction, and imposition of alternative urban discourses which were associated with the two other grammars of space I have evoked in Chapter 1. By producing and attempting – with some success – to impose geographies of the camps directly emerging from their collective representations, I argue that these actors displayed a subtle and hard-to-track transformation of the social relations in the camps. Geographers have established links between relations of power and the capacity to name and designate space, and one can think about place-naming and toponymy as a good entry point to apprehend the reconfiguration of power in a given society: “Critically interpreting place names and place naming has shown that, intrinsically, toponymy incorporates a knowledge/power relationship: Every place name displays some knowledge about the place it designates, and the choice of a particular toponym reflects a certain power relationship that is maintained through the use of this toponym” (Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2016).

In interaction, actors do not only attempt to impose their own representations and framings on social situations as dominant, but also their spatial representations, which mirror those social representations, among other elements through place naming, as shown by Nez in the case of the Puerta Del Sol plaza (2016). Asking the “where” of collective and everyday action as done by Tilly (2000) or Sewell (2001) goes hand in hand with asking how this “where” is considered. These elements appear as a good way to document, not as much the noticeable and visible evolutions of power, but the incremental and marginal which could in time prove to be such a visible evolution. Through the places where they mobilised, but also through discourses, their anchoring in public space, and in interviews, the activists demonstrated occasionally the existence of urban discourses alternative to the ones they described as dominant, highlighting the way in which the camps were in the end in a constant process of production, reproduction, and also challenge as spaces. The organisations produce *conceived space* through their actions. They carry and present various and conflicting perceptions and definitions of space and how it should or could be.

The associational camp: an NGO-ised sense of place?

The first step to the reproduction of Palestine in the camps is generally acknowledged to be the villages. In 1975, Bassem Sirhan explained how “In fact, the inhabitants of the camps are grouped around the Palestinian villages from which they originated and the extended family units are still the basis of social life. In this way many villages which the Israelis occupied by force, evacuated and demolished in Palestine are still, socially speaking, alive and coherent units. They have lost neither their social consciousness nor their family and village ties and if they returned tomorrow, this extraordinarily tenacious social factor would be of the greatest importance in the rapid reconstruction of Palestinian society” (Sirhan 1975). The development of the camps, has contributed to erode these village-based divides, especially during the revolutionary period (Peteet 2005). As discussed earlier, especially with the example of Tarshiha in Burj al-Barajneh, this structure was somewhat maintained and meshed into the camp’s toponymy alongside other spatial narratives, especially the nationalist one during the revolutionary period, and the period of the war. During the fieldwork, indications were not given in reference to villages, but to persons, families, villages, political parties, monuments, religion, as well as NGOs and parties.

I remember reading about Shatila and how there were places like Hayy Yaffa and...

Yes, in the past this was the truth. But now we don’t have a Hayy Yaffa or other. It’s done. Ariha Street, Najdeh Street or something. Foundations, or markets. There is Nasser Abu Rahoud Market so we have Nasser Abu Rahoud Street, we... I mean the name is related to some person or people who lived in Shatila in the past. Some people dead, martyrs, so... In the Northern part of Shatila the name of the streets is... Jenin Mosque, also related to the mosque, Shatila Mosque Street, Taqwa Street, Sabra Street, like this. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

No toponymy was imposed definitively upon the others, making the camps assemblages of place-naming systems corresponding to their various landscapes. As an example, going to Najdeh’s office in Burj al-Barajneh could be done by navigating via a number of landmarks illustrating several conflicting symbolic orders. After passing through the camp’s main gate at Tariq al Matar – right after the small industrial zone occupied mostly by nut roasting companies which delimited the entrance of the camp –, one had to keep to one’s left, passing the Security Committee’s sentry box, and passing the camp’s main mosque, where gatherings

took place on Nakba Day and Land Day. Continuing straightforward, one would enter one of the camp's main streets, which some informants called Haifa Street after the Haifa hospital, managed by the PRCS, located in it. It must be stressed that like all toponyms in the camp "Haifa Street" was not official, set, or consensual, and the street also bore several other names depending on which actor one spoke to. Before the hospital another important landmark was the office of one of the parties, generally guarded by several members and decorated in such a way as to evoke rural Palestine, and the monument commemorating the Palestinian struggles in the country and the camp. Representing a fedda'i fighter, the monument usually was locked behind a heavy gate, which was occasionally unlocked for events and commemorations. Haifa Street was one of the main axes in the camp, and as such was heavily covered in posters and flags from most political factions in the camp, and encroached upon by many shops. Right after the hospital, and down a small slope, the association's office was found after taking a right at a corner marked with a painted palm tree.

But place names also varied depending on who was talking, when, about what, and with whom: giving importance to such landmark at the detriment of such other, valorising such topology instead of such other was a form of conflict over the legitimate spatial representations. In the demonstration described earlier by Najdeh in Burj al-Barajneh, the chosen location was none of the places where nationalist events took place – the monument, the mosque, the camp's gate, etc. – but the alleyways under the windows of the Camp Service Officer's office, a place which was ignored by other groups and in other occasions. By choosing to go there instead of elsewhere, the activists were in effect anchoring a representation of space. In interviews, the participants and organisers of the demonstration explained the choice of this location in very straightforward terms, as the location corresponded to where the authority they aimed at questioning was:

The officer of UNRWA is the officer is responsible for the renovation of houses and for the medical issues. [That's why they went there]

Do you demonstrate in other places as well, like the entrance of the camp for instance?

Yes. But these problems in this gathering concerned the director of the camp and he is the one in charge of solving them. (Jamila and Bassam, January 2015)

Behind the apparent obviousness, what is at play is, concretely, the imposition of a sense of place, with its specific relevant locations and general geometry, which has little to do with the one attached to the partisan grammar. The obviousness of the choice of going under the windows of the CSO's office is only obvious as it is inscribed in the associational grammar, in which the relevant spatial representations have little to do with those of the partisan one.

These practices testified to the ways in which the organisations' representations were being anchored in the camps, less by visible criticism than by such "self-evident" practices, which accompanied a more general spatial encroachment by the organisations, partly relying on toponymy: with time, place names had begun integrating the presence of the associational actors and their importance. For example, the streets in which most NGOs had their offices would be named after these NGOs, not by a voluntary choice as much as through the fact that, as explained in Chapter 2, the offices were on the daily round of an important part of the population which visited them to complain, ask for relief, or as a more general habit. The effects of this practice on the other toponymies is dependent upon the informants, but as we have seen in Chapter 1, less than an "erasure", we see a "piling up" of competing toponymies, which vary upon who is talking, and when. The associations, in return, were making their presence visible by painting their symbols in the streets, adding self-made signs, generally painted on street corners and walls, informing the passer-by of what turn to take to get to the office. This was reinforced by the multiplication of placards and symbols evoking the NGOs, their projects, and their work, put in place by activists as part of their actions for the organisations.

Becoming part of the everyday landscape of the camps, the associations marked the camp more generally, and in the same way as Haifa Hospital in Burj al-Barajneh, or Ahlam Laji's offices in Shatila would become landmarks to help one find one's way, in a very similar manner, as both formed points where dwellers had to pass regularly, their names thus becoming a part of the spatial routines. Newly-arrived in Shatila, Abu Salem confessed during the walking interview conducted with him that deciphering the camp's symbolic geography was in the first days as hard for him as it would be for any foreigner, having to incorporate the camp's history and political relations at the same time as its spatial layout:

[He laughs] Yes it is hard, it's very hard because the streets here they don't even have names in general. So if you want to go to a place you must go to someone and ask them where is so and so and they will take you there. But it's true the streets have, it's not that they don't have names, for instance you know there was a massacre. Before the massacre the streets had different names. In Yarmouk the streets all have names from Palestine for example, here they have taken names from people who died in the massacre, or some party, or... and now also the NGOs. The street where you will find Najdeh is called Najdeh Street, because you find the office of Najdeh there, and the NGOs are very known so where Sumud is you will call it Sumud, or Basmeh w Zeituna, or whatever. Because people know that, that's where they go, but you have to know the place a bit you see? Then there is something else, you can have a district, called because there was people from certain villages coming to live in it. (Abu Salem, Shatila, February 2016)

Yet if Abu Salem describes a space which is getting meshed with the presence of the NGOs, this "NGO-ised" space is not a rupture, but a continuity from the historical process described by Peteet, by which place-making in the camps depends upon the history of the Palestinians (2005:98–99). Although the logics of competition between actors and localised grammars of interaction I have described was not explicitly about place, it still left a trace on it.

The familiar, the Syrians, and the others: the limits of the camps?

For some interviewees, a more discreet, even, and perhaps more dislocating phenomenon regarding the Palestinian identity of the camps may have been their urban integration in the Lebanese urban fabric, turning them into marginal parts of the city, increasingly less specifically Palestinian. The urban development of the camps has been marked by an increase of population and a densification which has turned them, as far as the external appearance went, into relatively classic urban shapes in the city. The transformations of the 1990s and 2000s, following the re-encampment of the Palestinians after the end of the Civil War, and the return of a number of non-Palestinian populations into the camps, especially workers from the South-Eastern parts of Asia, and of many Syrian refugees after 2011, contributed to a feeling of dispossession for a number of refugees attached to the camps, because of the hardening of the competition to access relief, work, and space: "The 'new' refugees are accused of all the evils in the camp and the country in general, in terms of

economic, social, political, and security issues” (Abou Zaki 2015). This element was mitigated by the description of the commonality between the Syrians in general – and Palestinian-Syrians in particular – and the Palestinian-Lebanese:

Did the arrival of the Syrian refugees change a lot in the camp?

No, not in the ideology or the mode of thinking but there have been changes in the population. You have a lot of Syrian people and families in the camp. In Burj al-Barajneh and other camps. They have, they’re about, the average of the Syrian family is 6 members, they have a lot of kids, not like us.

So is there a difference in the everyday life between Palestinians and people who are not from the camp?

A little bit, not that huge, both we are Arabs, we share the same thought, we have the same traditions or norms. But there are some small details that differ between Palestinian and Lebanese and Syrian, as usual, every type of people has his own specific traditions. (Bakr, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

Our third biggest issue is that we are transforming, in terms of the dwellers, from a Palestinian camp, toward a camp where 60% are Palestinians, and 40%, more than 40%, are foreigners.

Lebanese, or...

No. Not Lebanese. Foreigners. From Bangladesh, from Sri Lanka, from Ethiopia, they rent. They group up and rent one home here. One at a time. But there is 40% of them. So there is a lot of demand for water, a lot of demand for electricity. Many... problems with the environment. (...) And this demand means the development of many many many buildings. (Kader, Burj al-Barajneh, December 2014)

In the interviews, with the exception of the migrant workers from South-East Asia and East Africa who marked the fieldwork both by their absence in situations of observation and by their presence in the evocation of worries, the newcomers were scarcely blamed or denounced as problematic guests – in particular because a number of the interviewed activists were effectively engaged with them daily – but their presence and the increased population and heterogeneity of the camps they represented for a number of interviewees a sign of

transformation of the camps themselves. This impression was, especially for the oldest interviewees, more related to the echo of the past than a reality of what the camps had been materially. With the densification of the urban, but also the urban integration of the camps, the impression of an increasing anonymisation of the camps as a space as a whole was growing:

The buildings are very high and there is a lot of risk in them, because of the construction. There is a lot of garbage, also. And now there's a lot of people... it's not like a community anymore. Before it was like a family: the uncle, the parents, everything, everyone knew one another. (Munira, Shatila, January 2015)

Every year, the camp becomes more bad. More bad. The people inside Shatila left Shatila, and came other people, different people, we didn't know them, and not good, people not good, and who did not good things. And the government didn't look and care about Shatila, because we have the factions. (...) When we came from the [gate at the] clinic it used to be bigger, a bigger one, to enter. But now they made two buildings, so now the way became very small. Yes. But, at the past, all the entrances were the same, bigger. Before, 20 years ago, Shatila, and the life in Shatila was better than outside. We had... trees and... a lot of trees. I remember when I was a child, Shatila was very beautiful. Very very very beautiful. Only three floors, the biggest building was three floors, and all the, I mean, the last floor had arbours (*'arîsha*), a lot of plants on the last floors, and also on the ways. Here, behind where Tariq works, I remember three trees. One behind the market, one behind Najdeh, and... at the beginning of the road where we came. So Shatila was very beautiful but the people became more so we needed the buildings, so they cut the trees, and where there were arbours they cut the arbours and built another floor. And when some country outside were at war, like Syria, the refugees came to Shatila and people built and built and built. And we arrive to this. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

Amira's memory of a better camp at the end of the Civil War could be opposed to the descriptions quoted earlier, stating that at the time "Only three buildings stood in Shatila". But we must mostly question the motive of mobilising this representation. This expression, related to the "problems of the camps", was a common one among Palestinian-Lebanese who associated the transformation of the camp in its social and affective structure with the development of these problems. Several interviewees evoked a rupture between camps formerly filled with friendly and open faces, associated with feelings of familiarity and safety, where one could enjoy trees and sunlight, and the current anonymous, humid, dark, and overcrowded camps marked by the "problems of the camps". The conditions of living in the

camps were as much at stake in these descriptions as the dwellers' impression to live in a familiar place. While the "foreigners", and especially the Syrian refugees and Palestinian-Syrians, were not often explicitly blamed during the fieldwork for disrupting the camps, their increased presence constituted a salience for camp dwellers to evaluate the spaces they lived in and constitute discourses about an impression of marginalisation in these spaces. Although the worried discourse on the future of the camps as spaces of identity has been observed regularly throughout their existence, this worry found in the arrival of foreigners a renewed importance.

This paradoxical discourse on hosting while considering the hosted as a potential risk for the camps on the long run was accompanied by the realities of the settling of Syrians and Palestinian-Syrians in the camps, and the fact that they too had to make sense of an unknown space, therefore engaging in a specific work of place-making. In Burj al-Barajneh the organisation of the network of refugees from Syria by Bassam and his acquaintances came in particular from the experience of the camps and a common impression of trauma:

When I came here, I realised I never lived in a camp. I lived in a big city. Al-Yarmouk camp is not a camp. If you had a chance, at the time now al-Yarmouk camp is demolished. You will never have a chance to see al-Yarmouk. Al-Yarmouk after Bashar al-Assad is not al-Yarmouk. Yes. Al-Yarmouk wasn't at all a camp. When I arrived here I discovered the tragedy, with the Palestinians. Even those, Lebanese-Palestinians, who live here. They live, really in tragedy. They live with drugs, demolished infrastructure, everything is... unbearable, let's say. But they live. Because it seems to me that since we are Palestinians, we are fated or doomed by God. To be miserable, to live miserable lives from birth to death. I don't know. It's God's will maybe. Yes.

So what did you think? At that moment? How did it make you feel?

Honestly, first of all, there is a very big difference between the camps. Between al-Yarmouk camp and Burj al-Barajneh. As buildings, streets, electricity, all infrastructure. First of all. Second, Palestinians in Syria can work. Be teachers, officers, bankers, lawyers, doctors and do everything. They can do whatever. Except to be ministers or President of course, even Syrians don't have the right to be President. You see? But here they are deprived of about 70 works, kinds of works, as you know. They learn, they go to University, they get educated, but they don't work! They stay here. This is not life! This is ghetto! This is... here, the government in

Lebanon adopted a racial policy against the Palestinians. The difference is so big! There is no similarity, by the way, between the life of the Palestinians in Syria and the life of the Palestinians here in Lebanon. (...) Streets, roads, or alleys, what are they? I have been here for seven months, even now I can't go down to the... I will miss the road. Yes. I'll be lost. Every time I go down, I'm lost. Where? (Bassam, Burj al-Barajneh, April 2015)

The feeling presented by Bassam is coherent with the presentation of the arrival in the camps made by most of the Syrians interviewed during the fieldwork: as they had to leave a country at war and install in marginalised parts of the city, the experience of the legal status attached to their position of refugees was associated with their experience of the camps as places. Nonetheless as it has been presented in Chapter 2 the refugees from Syria were not entirely in an external relation to the camps, and people such as Bassam or Tariq were commonly considered as being representatives of the camp population in the same terms as other “sons of the camp”. This integration of a group to the space of the camps was associated with the spatial practice of the refugees from Syria in the camps and the city, which conserved specificity. In Burj al-Barajneh, Bassam and his acquaintances were at the time of the investigation active in constituting networks of refugees from Syria, by organising house visits and meetings, participating to various associations which could provide the community with relief and help, keeping track of the refugees from Syria coming and going, as well as the history of the meeting of the members of the group with various camp and non-camp authorities. These activities were at the time of the fieldwork beginning to mark the camps' space as well Amira, for example, reflected upon what Shatila meant and would mean in the future:

I want to talk, and give you some information. In the future. Related to Shatila. In the future, you told me of that professor who wrote about Hayy Yaffa, Hayy, Hayy... right? In the future, you will have Hayy Aleppo, Hayy Homs... really. Really! In the next place, here, will be Deir el Ferdis, all the people who will live here will have lived in Deir el Ferdis, some place in Syria.

What do you think of this?

I think all the Palestinians will leave, in the end. There are a lot who emigrate from the camp. Because they are educated and if it is not possible to work while being from the camp, they

have to depart. To Canada. Or to... even the Syrians, they will travel Denmark, Sweden, Germany, most people go to Germany. After a year, most people travel. And the people who stay in Shatila, also are waiting for another chance to leave Shatila, for any place in Europe, like Canada. I hear now that a lot of people want to go to Canada. (...) I will stay. I want to stay forever in Shatila. I want to help. Palestinians, or any, any people who suffered from anything in Shatila. We're all humans, we're all people. We are all human, yes. So I will travel to Germany, only for four days, if I have a work, I will come back here. I can stay in Germany, but I don't want, I want to stay in Shatila. (Amira, Shatila, April 2016)

Amira's disillusioned discourse on the future of Shatila and its eventual dissolution as a Palestinian locale must be replaced in its context, as one of the very last answers of a long interview, both aiming at summarising and projecting herself in the future, while opposing the perceived monolithic character of the nationalist discourse on the camps. It nonetheless highlighted the resurgence of a discourse on the camps' eventual disappearance – and through them, of the disappearance of the Palestinian memory – in Lebanon, previously observed through the register of the opposition to *tawfīn*. This discourse can serve as a marker of the way the urban reproduction of the camps' space has been influenced by a group's tactics of survival in it, a group which, despite remaining poorly organised and not particularly voiceful, has contributed to the evolution of the camps already.

With these examples I have tried to show the ways in which actions, both collective and individual, were inscribed spatially, but in return also contributed to produce space. The very meaning of the space where the actors interacted was to an extent at stake, as shown by Peteet's concept of the camps as a metonymy (2005:205). By apprehending the actors' sense of place, what we can observe is the result of social interactions on a background which remains not only historically constructed and very rigid still, but also very influential. This is coherent with the definition Massey gives of social life as a return to "a place that has moved on, the layers of our meetings intersecting and affecting each other; weaving a process of space-time. (...) 'Here' is an intertwining of histories in which the spatiality of those histories (their then as well as their here) is inescapably entangled" (2005:139).

III. Conclusion of the chapter:

In this last chapter I have tried to realise a “return to space”, and close the loop of the proposed analysis: while the rest of the analysis has been about the effects of space on action, allowing it and giving it shape, this chapter aimed at showing how, if the observed phenomena are constructed in and by space, they also participate in its production: through the work they engage around the production of scale as well as place, the engaged actors show how the production and the imposition of a relevant space in which to include their action is part of the processes of mobilisation and demobilisation they participate in.

For organisations such as the PYN, constructing a translocal scale at which they managed to combine the social resources at their disposal in a way which allowed them to an extent to dominate a number of interactions in public with other actors, in particular the PCs, was a necessity. But the strategy was not as much determined by clever planning, but as the very definition of what the organisation was: for the organisation’s members, the situatedness of the organisation in scale was part of its working and their militant socialisation passed by a number of activities which contributed to the scale-work allowing it to exist. In the meantime, this situatedness permitted the transfer of innovations such as local public problems or programmes and repertoires of action within the organisations. This in return tells a lot about how space remains relevant beyond direct locational proximity. If the organisation’s activism was always local, it was not so in terms of “neighbourhoods”, as Appadurai would say, or direct spatial continuity, but in a relevant system of places in relation to each other, a specific geometry, to refer to Massey’s concept. Far from operating only in the sense of a “widening” or a “shrinking”, scale works as a social relation, providing the power geometry of interactions. Scale, as employed here, did not only designate the relative “size” of social phenomena, but also the measure of this “size”, which is intrinsically plural and the object of the same operations of valuations as other framings. By such an example we see how, as described by Oliver and Johnston, operations of framing are much less about the content of the representations and discourses presented by the actors than about the elements by which they perceive and make sense of reality (2005). By contesting at what scale the interactions

were and by making the camps as a whole the relevant scale, the members of the PYN did not only generalise their claims, but also circumvented and challenged the PCs' legitimacy.

Besides, I have discussed how collective action, while being rooted in a sense of place, also participated in place-making by processes of anchoring. As time passes and interactions multiply, the spatial grammars which make interaction possible in the camps are changed progressively by them. This was particularly striking in the case of the associational grammar, which is being produced and reproduced as actors manage to successfully anchor their presence in the camps and impose their own spatial representations over, or in the same time as, other representations valued by other actors, such as the partisan ones, which formerly shaped the symbolic meanings of the camps. Explanations in terms of "NGO-isation" of the camps are relativized in these matters: NGO narratives are present, but as previous ones add themselves to the camps' toponymies, not entirely erasing them. The question raised by the presence of a relatively "recent" group, the refugees from Syria – both Syrians and Palestinian-Syrians, and the wariness to see the camps dissolve into Syrian spaces can be considered through the hindsight of previous experiences, and relativized, even though it is impossible to anticipate the camps' futures.

In all of these domains, the production of space appears as an institutionalisation, in the sense given by Berger and Luckmann (1991 [1966]). The production of space and place appears, as any process of social construction, as the result of struggles between diverse social groups, which have to make do with what appears as objectively given while at the same time trying to impose their own representation of what should be. As such the conflicts I have described are not merely conflicts in space but appear also truly as conflicts about space, even when this dimension is not named: the capacity to impose spatial representations, in terms of scale as well as place, is a stake in these conflicts, and determining what the camps are appears as equally as important as solving specific problems.

General Conclusion

This thesis opened with the ambition to pursue Rosemary Sayigh's reflexion on "alternative frameworks of national struggle" in the Palestinian refugee camps (2011). The "problems of the camps" have appeared as one of the ways such alternative or emerging frameworks took shape in the camps. The emergence of such spatialised political problems and the proof of the failure of the PCs is not simply a question of popular politics versus the partisan structures, but emerge through specific forms of political work from situated actors. In this conclusion I will present the main findings from this work, its limitations, and possible continuities drawing from it.

Findings

I opened this thesis with the ambition to look at the relation between how the camps in post-Civil War Lebanon have been produced as spaces, and the phenomena of contentious action within these camps. Looking at the social movements around the "problems of the camps" is a way to apprehend this question. Overall, the response I provide to my research problem is that space, as a social construct, provides an enabling context to social activities in the camps. The groups I have looked at were situated at the intersection of several different activities, including humanitarian and associational work, employment, and collective action. What is at stake, as described by Lemieux in his theoretical discussion, is to reconstruct the specific order of things in which this makes sense, in order to apprehend from up close the forms of rationalities which the observable actors are taken in. By successfully describing the universe of constraint and possibilities, meanings, and representations which make the world in which the social actors evolve, we can then comprehend the forms of politicisation they are taken in. Indeed I have argued that the matter is less that of politicisation versus depoliticisation, of engagement versus disengagement, but of that specific type of politicisation, that specific type of engagement, versus those others.

What appears from paying attention to the “problems of the camps” and the forms of engagement surrounding them is how they allow us to observe the ways in which political engagement is “done”, as a set of actions, in regard to social norms. The “problems of the camps” did not emerge from nowhere, but from the action of situated people in particular places and at a certain point of time. The historical formation of the camps, described in Chapter One, has contributed to forming these spaces as complex assemblages of both material and symbolic elements, but also, as described in Chapter Two, of differently-structured groups which act according to the social resources and representations they have access to. The forms taken by contentious action, as described in Chapter Three, are dependent upon this structuration of social space, and in return, as discussed in Chapter Four, influence it. Social movements are never the strict expression of something that would be “popular demand” or “the general opinion”. They are always the result of complex processes of formation and mobilisation, which can be approached in and of themselves to question, not as much “what the people wants”, if by this question we suppose that the answer can be clear and explicit, but how people organise when they want something.

Working between disciplines was particularly interesting for this objective. I have looked at social movements outside of periods of crisis, and in particular interrogated this object with the tools of both SMT and human geography. The rationale for this choice was mostly twofold. I proposed that SMT provided us with the tools to look at Palestinian camps politics in a renewed way and observe phenomena overlooked by other sets of theory, in particular studies focusing themselves on a political anthropology or oral history of the camps. SMT is, I argue, a useful toolbox even when looking at contexts where “classical” social movements are hardly observed: as the discipline has mostly left aside its most formalist positions with the development of political process theory, it allows looking at a very broad range of phenomena while maintaining a cohesive set of questions about them. The other main rationale for undertaking the study as I did in this thesis was the advantage of spatialisation for SMT itself. I have argued in favour of a general spatial turn in social sciences, in particular the part of political sociology which pays attention to contentious action which would go further than questioning space as a mere physical container of social action, or as a mere result of it.

The theoretical argument of this work, the spatial dimension of social life, draws from a long established and generally acknowledged argument. On that sense this thesis intends on developing and discussing rather than innovating. To do so demanded interrogating the various debates existing in human geography and taking positions within them. The question is not if but rather how space matters. Importing considerations from human geography into political sociology has a particular effect on the place of the contextual in the explanatory models we employ. The context is not merely a setting where stuff happens, as I have tried to show, but makes the possibilities for social action while being made by it. From a certain sociological perspective, which I have associated with pragmatic sociology, the context can be seen as making the meaning of what we observe. Affirming as did Tilly that stuff happens in places (2000) is only relevant insofar as the effect of this situatedness is the object of the study, and not a way to translate universal mechanisms in local terms. By considering the structuration of the camps' space, both in physical and symbolic terms – this divide existing in the argument more than in the actors' experience – we can unfold the modalities of collective action the informants have access to.

Further than that, the proposal I have made to reconsider the question of framing in SMT through the two combined theoretical perspectives of geography and pragmatic sociology could serve as a response to a number of limitations schools in SMT face. This is in particular the case of the framing approaches, some of which have had a tendency to anchor themselves in a top-down, leaders-focused approach to the concept of framing, which eventually merely considers the discourses consciously produced by these leaders to recruit more members. The approach I have taken to framing provides much more depth to the notion. Essentially, a frame is not a discourse, but a mode of perceiving the world and acting on it. What appeared central in the camps was how much stabilising what was perceived as the reality mattered in the studied groups, not because of an effort by leaders to “manipulate” members' perception, but because the entire mobilisation was to an extent a collective effort to determine what was going on. This does not mean that organisations were not traversed by relations of power, that things were entirely fluid and up to personal interpretation, or that the proposed model is one of transparent transaction between atomised and autonomous actors. On the contrary, such conflicts are the occasion for deeply anchored forms of social structuration to emerge and be approachable. Lastly revisiting the concept of framing as I have tried to do here allows us to

look back at other major themes of SMT, such as the question of resources and structures of opportunities, and to show how much these matter as parts of collective controversies on which actors struggle: defining which social order the group is situated and what reality is also implies defining which tools, and which parts of a perceived structure of opportunities, will matter in the events' unfolding.

One of the thesis' main arguments, on that matter, lies in the grammatical analogy as I proposed it. The model has several interests. It provides a way out of the structure-agency paradox noted by Koopmans, situating politicisation in continuity with social life in general, and showing the relation between ordinary modes of social interaction, and political modes of interaction. Looking at the diversity of ways to apprehend the world – which I call grammars – and taking this diversity into account in the way we modelise politicisation allows for a clearer understanding of what politicisation is and how it occurs. To do so, I have argued in favour of taking the long-described and well-accepted spatiality of the social to its full extent. The form of contextual determinism which forms the model of the spatialised grammars of interaction allows us to see how the social actors are constantly constrained by the question of “how” they do what they do, in order for this action to be apprehended as “acceptable” by the others. By associating this consideration, which could be seen as the epistemological proposal of comprehensive sociology, to the existence of conflicting frameworks of social life, anchored locally, we can integrate another layer of analysis. The opposition between actors like those studied here and others is not between “political” and “not political”, but indeed between certain politics and others, none of which is less “artificial” than the others. Looking at politics through this framework, especially in contexts where the formal/informal or state/nonstate divide is not particularly relevant, allows seeing how politics is always something in the process of being enunciated and institutionalised, rather than a set of topics and ways of speaking, or a realm in which the social actors occasionally enter.

Indeed one of my aims was to take distance myself from a number of binary representations on popular “resistance”: a discourse entertaining the impression that the relative decline of partisan activism was a decline of politics in the camps, in a period dominated by humanitarianism; another one, on the contrary, associating grassroots activism as a form of social creativity in front of the rigidities of party-based Palestinian politics. These discourses

can be the underlying illusions of a part of the literature, each one “feeding” the other. What has been shown in this thesis, for a part, is the way in which the political is, at the small scale, much less clearly defined and relies on conflicts between ways to politicise between different categories of actors. Doing so I have attempted to develop a proposal in what has been called the framing approach to social movements, i.e. the approach focusing primarily on the effect of shared representations of the real on collective action. The groups I have described do not represent the “true” Palestinian refugees or Palestinian camps more than any other actors present in the field, they merely represent one “take” on Palestinian camps politics in a broad system of actors which I have attempted to describe in Chapter One.

Chapter Three and Four have been also centred around the importance of social engagements to produce sense from space and place: the constant social work which surrounds framing the “problems of the camps” and the camps as a space show how thinking of space as an easily-accessed text is misleading, even though the actors have competencies to apprehend and analyse the world they live in, and are not “cultural idiots”. Unclean water or accumulating garbage bags are not “more obvious” a public problem than the right to work or to return. The same processes of public problem construction occur when talking about everyday issues than others. Contrarily, for example, to Castells’ theory of urban social movements, and in support of Auyero and Switsun, I have tried to show how much the urban is, in and of itself, not easily readable, always ambivalent, and how much its politicisation is reliant on social work. This opens the question of the status of the processes of trial by space and looking at what is at stake behind politicising space. The particularities of politics in the camps, and in particular the place taken by the partisan grammar, has to be recalled. The thesis has been traversed by the repetitive desire to appear apolitical for actors who otherwise recognised being engaged in something that had to do with the political, of trying to change the conditions of living in the camps, its governance, or at least to question its leadership. Looking deeper at it, and considering politics not as a realm but as a relation, this affirmation has been described as a way to carry out acceptable denunciations in the camps, following other grammars than the partisan one. Politicising space is therefore not a matter of not doing politics than doing politics by other means.

Another implication of this work can be found in the choice not to work on a monographic basis but in a multi-sited manner. This is once again not an innovation, and has been

employed extensively in the social sciences. Trying to apply this method to the Beirut camps may have provided original findings, however. Dorai's work, which extended the camp's space to include the trajectories of exile, as well as Puig's observations on the refugees' intimate geographies of the city have been particular inspirations on that point. The ethnographic monograph, which has been thoroughly used by the literature on the Palestinian camps of Lebanon, has considerable advantages in the depth and the precision it can bring to the topic. The method also tends to overlook the place of mobility in camp dwellers' lives. Almost none of the informants met in the field had not lived at least in another camp, another part of the city, of the country, or another country altogether. This mobility had effects on the actors' representations and on the resources they could mobilise to engage politically, as I have shown in Chapter Three and Four. Refugee studies have, as discussed in the introduction, tended to anchor refugees into the camps and to assume their spatial fixity. What appears at a smaller level, that of the family and the individual, is on the contrary a world composed of different spaces in relation, and not on a mere local/international divide.

Limitations

Several elements mark the limitations of the present study, beginning with its scale. The groups studied represent only a small part of camps which house tens of thousands of people, in an even broader group of several millions. Looking at a very small effective like I have done in this thesis implies abandoning any pretention for statistical representativeness, one of the forms of scientific credibility in the social sciences. I do not with this work pretend to represent more than what has been the actual object of the study: the modes of engagement of a group of actors situated in the Beirut camps. As such my proposal in terms of spatialised grammars of interaction, for example, does not aim at covering the entirety of such grammars in the camps, but merely those which have been observable during the investigation. The other models which have inspired this one, especially Thévenot and Boltanski's model of the "cities", but also in a way the framing analysis, have seen similarly an apparent constant expansion of the alternative cities and framings. If generalised to other groups present in the camps, this proposal may similarly reveal more of such frameworks. Nonetheless the aim of this study has not been to cover more than its very modest object, following Olivier de Sardan's warning in this thesis' introduction. I have tried to follow the answer he provides to

his own enunciation of the problem of representativeness: plausibility, or the capacity for a qualitative work to adequately represent its own object.

This leaves little satisfaction regarding the question of the generalisation of the proposals discussed in this work. If we are discussing, as we are, of a small-scale and non-representative object, then what this discussion can do for other contexts is questionable. The way in which the proposals made here can talk to geography, the study of social movements, or that of the Palestinian refugee camps is necessarily hampered by the restriction of the object. The addition of new observations on the camps, especially as I have taken a different perspective from the rich monograph which has been extensively employed in the study of the Palestinian camps of Lebanon, provides a partial solution to this problem for the study of the camps. Looking, as I have attempted to do here, at the forms of contentious politics unfolding in the camps' space, from the proposed perspective, opens the question of how politics are apprehended in this specific object. For a part, politics have been seen through the question of memory and return, which has pushed, as shown by Allan, to sometimes overlook the politics of the "here and now" which occur in these spaces. The same can be said of refugee studies in general: there is no reason for which the topics which are generally associated with humanitarian relief, such as accessing urban services, food, water, electricity, etc. should not be apprehended in refugee camps the same way as it is in other locales. The critique of the Agambian framework has on the contrary shown how much the refugees remained active political groups, despite and sometimes because of the technologies of control which are imposed to them, far from a largely fantasised "bare life". The politics associated with the material, in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon, have been slightly overlooked, despite some excellent studies, and the field could benefit from a more developed attention, especially when taken into account the effects of over-research in these spaces, particularly on issues of memory, right to return, but also Islamist engagements around the issue of "jihadism".

The question of the generalisation of the findings finds other problems when it comes to the disciplinary fields I have tried to inscribe myself in, especially concerning a discipline, SMT, which has constructed its models on the comparison of large-scale phenomena and a large number of occurrences. The main way in which this study can inform it, I believe, is by working as a boundary case and by questioning the concepts used by SMT. The advantage of including questions of geography in SMT has been promoted regularly and eloquently by

several scholars, as I have discussed in the introduction. The generalisation on that matter may come from the attempt I have made to constantly maintain the dialogue between the field and the disciplines at hand. The importance of space has often been employed to focus on social movements fitting the “classical” representations: mass protest, marches, petitions, etc. In this essay I have tried to show how the definition of what is or not a social movement can also depend on this spatialisation, as the structuration of the locales participate to the structuration of the ways to do politics. We are therefore situated in the continuity of Massey’s proposals when it came to space and the social sciences: the spatial turn remains, to a large extent, still an agenda to be conducted. I do not pretend to have proposed a unified theory of what could be a form of spatialised social sciences here, but to take the discussion seriously and to explore its implications. As such this study has implications for both disciplines.

A more fundamental limit of the work can be found in the camp populations that are represented in this work. I have aimed to work on the camps themselves, as explained in the introduction, rather than on Palestinian refugees, although these have formed the majority of the informants. This choice was partly motivated by the fact that, increasingly, the question of the reduction of the Palestinian-Lebanese population of the camps is being asked, and other social groups find shelter in these spaces. But there are parts of the camp population which have been excluded from my work, especially the migrant workers from South-East Asia, who make a sizeable share of the camps’ population but have remained very hard to access during the nine months of fieldwork. This exclusion is damageable to the thesis because of its very ambition: it is likely that interrogating this population would provide a different picture of the camps entirely, and shed light on an ignored geography of these areas. Some projects have been engaged on the geographies of Asian migrant expatriates in the Lebanese cities and in the camps, which tend to show great promise. This neglect has unfortunately been due to my own lack of time and integration in the camps, as well as the fact that the groups I studied were not invested, as far as I could see, by these social groups.

Continuities

This work could be pursued in several ways. It could be conducted in other camps in Lebanon, exploring the particularities of place in the various areas of the country. This would particularly be interesting as the studied groups are essentially mobile and located on several, and sometimes all, of the camps. The question of mobility could also be questioned: a lot has been supposed or deduced here about the effects of residential mobility on careers and engagement. A more systematic enquiry on some of the actors evoked here could also be led, interrogating more deeply the actors fitting the partisan grammar, but also the donors, international organisations, etc. which have been seen acting in the camps. A part of the field which has been neglected concerned the migrant workers in the camps, as I have said, but other groups also appear as lacking, especially those organised around religious organisations and networks. A more systematic and generalised approach to the field would necessarily integrate a range of quantitative tools which have rarely been employed in the camps because of the cost and difficulty of putting such enquiries in place in these spaces. Such an approach would also give the occasion to tackle the issue of representativeness. Another systematic approach which has lacked in this work was the proper mapping of the camps, which has been done here with very crude tools. A more fine-ground and up-to-date mapping, including the various networks and places of importance, would also probably be of help for the camp dwellers themselves. All of these methods could be employed to refine and precise what has been discussed here.

This work may have theoretical continuities as well, as it has only proposed a first draft of what may be a reflexion on space and social movements. The agenda opened long ago about the spatialisation of SMT and the social sciences in general is promising. As the agenda keeps on being an emerging one, we can ask what place it can have in the social sciences. The work accomplished in human geography since the beginning of the spatial turn holds great promise for the social sciences in general, as it allows these disciplines to take a step back and integrate concepts which they have had little occasions, on the long run, to reflect upon. One of the reflexions I have tried to hold in this work was to see what happens to an established field of the social sciences when questioned by this discipline, but also by fields often located outside of its grasp. I hope to have made a compelling argument that it does benefit from it. Reflecting upon the concepts of space, place, and scale, beyond the somewhat formalist

way of considering them which has been present in certain forms of sociology, can provide a great deal of depth to the conceptual reflection. The discussion will, I believe, only benefit from a great deal of inter-linguistic work such as the one proposed here. As the disciplines develop, we can ask to what extent each loses essential contributions by being linguistically bounded.

Interest for the camps' space should remain vivid. The camps are, seven decades after their creation, still existing and still identifiable as places in the Lebanese urban landscape. The Palestinian question remains vivid, and the current crises, especially the Syrian one, should not lead to forget them. Maybe more than ever before the situation appears to be stuck in an ever-degrading status quo for the Palestinian refugees. The increasing fear of exile to other countries and abandonment of the camps to other social groups should not be seen as an expression of a particular form of xenophobia from the refugees, rather than anguish in front of a situation where very little is proposed to them in terms of acceptable futures. It is not the work of social scientists, especially not of PhD students, to foresee the future. What will happen to the camps is out of our grasp. The refugees may eventually go. They may eventually stay. Perhaps, as Amira expressed in one of the interviews, they will become associated with other groups. Perhaps yet another revolutionary period for Palestinian refugees will begin, its germs identifiable a posteriori in the current period. Such discussion, interesting as it is, will be eventually set by the political actors at play, and not by research.

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Annexes

I. Map production

The maps presented on Figures 1 and 2 were kindly produced by Neil Ketchley. The GPS coordinates of the designated locations were collected using Google Maps and were entered in QGIS.

The other presented maps were produced using a mix of similar methods and scanned maps of the Beirut cadastre of 2004. Topographic indications were added by hand.

II. List of interviewees

The following table presents all the interviewees having participated to formal interviews, in chronological order. Informal interviews were not kept.

Name	Date	Place	Details
Mansour	November 2014 and March 2015	Mar Elias	Core member of the PYN, in his 50s, development consultant, former Fateh member
Farah	November 2014	Mar Elias	Employee of the Mar Elias PC, in her 20s, student
Swiss Development Council spokesperson	November 2014	Beirut	
Bakr	December 2014	Burj al-Barajneh	PYN member, in his late 20s, journalist
Kader	December 2014 and March 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	PYN member, in his 20s, unemployed
Salma	December 2014	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member, in her 30s, Syrian
Nada	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member, in her 30s, Syrian
Badia	January 2015	Beirut	Najdeh member, coordinator of the gender-based violence programme, in her 50s
Abu Nasser	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh beneficiary, member of the informal council for Syrians in Burj al-Barajneh, in his 60s

Jamila (interpreter: Bassam)	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member, in her 30s, member of the informal council for Syrians in Burj al-Barajneh, Syrian
Salma	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member, in her 40s, Syrian
Abu Rabi	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh beneficiary, in his 60s
Marwan	January 2015	Shatila	Najdeh member, in his 20s, higher education degree, walking interview
Munira (interpreter: Marwan)	January 2015	Shatila	Najdeh member, camp coordinator for Najdeh, in her 60s
Nada (interpreter: Bassam)	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member, in her 20s, Syrian, higher education degree
Abu Yassin	February 2015	Shatila	Leader of the local DFLP group, in his 60s
Samira (interpreter: Bertrand)	February 2015	Shatila	DFLP member, in her 60s, close to Najdeh
Um Muhammad	February 2015	Shatila	Najdeh member, in her 60s
Yazid	March 2015	Mar Elias	PYN member and coordinator, in his 30s, former student activist, former party member, higher education degree

Taha	March 2015	Mar Elias	PYN member, Pursue employee, in his 30s, former party member (Fateh)
UNRWA spokesperson	March 2015	Beirut	
Bassam	March 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member, organiser of the informal council for Syrians in Burj al-Barajneh, in his 50s, higher education degree, close to left-wing parties
Redwan	March 2015	Mar Elias	Head of a human rights organisation, in his late 60s
Aziz and Abu Sufian	April 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Markaz al-Naqab co-founder and member, former Burj al-Barajneh grassroots activists, in their 30s. Abu Sufian mostly playing the role of interpreter, with occasional remarks
Layla	April 2015	Beirut	Director of Najdeh, in her 40s
Naima	April 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Najdeh member and head of the Burj al-Barajneh branch, in her 50s

Mona	April 2015	Beirut	Co-founder of Markaz al-Naqab, works in research, higher education degree, former student activist, Lebanese, in her 30s
Tammam	April 2015	Beirut	Member of Markaz al-Naqab, higher education degree, in his late 20s
Um Latif (interpreter: Bertrand)	April 2015	Shatila	Member of Najdeh, in her 60s
Umar	April 2015	Beirut	Member of the PYN, higher education degree, in his 30s
PLO PC	April 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Head of the Popular Committee, in his 60s
Coalition PC	May 2015	Burj al-Barajneh	Head of the Popular Committee, in his 60s, other members of the PC present but silent
Unified PC	May 2015	Mar Elias	Head of the Popular Committee, in his 60s
Ahmed (interpreter: Bertrand)	April 2015	Shatila	Member of the PYN, in his 20s
Samir and Latifa	April 2015	Shatila	Members of the PYN, in their 20s
Aisha (interpreter: Bertrand)	April 2015	Shatila	Teacher, participant to the local committee, in her 30s
Tariq	February 2016	Shatila	Coordinator of the CfW programme in Shatila, in his late 30s, Syrian

Yusuf	February 2016	Shatila	Participant to the CfW program, in his 20s, Syrian
Nabil	February 2016	Shatila	Participant to the CfW program, in his 30s, Syrian
Abu Salem	February 2016	Shatila	Participant to the CfW programme, close to the PFLP, in his late 60s, walking interview
HEKS spokesperson	February 2016	Beirut	
Fadi	April 2016	Shatila	Member of the PYN, local activist, former party member, in his late 30s
Amira	April 2016	Shatila	Local activist, student, in her 20s

III. Recorded events

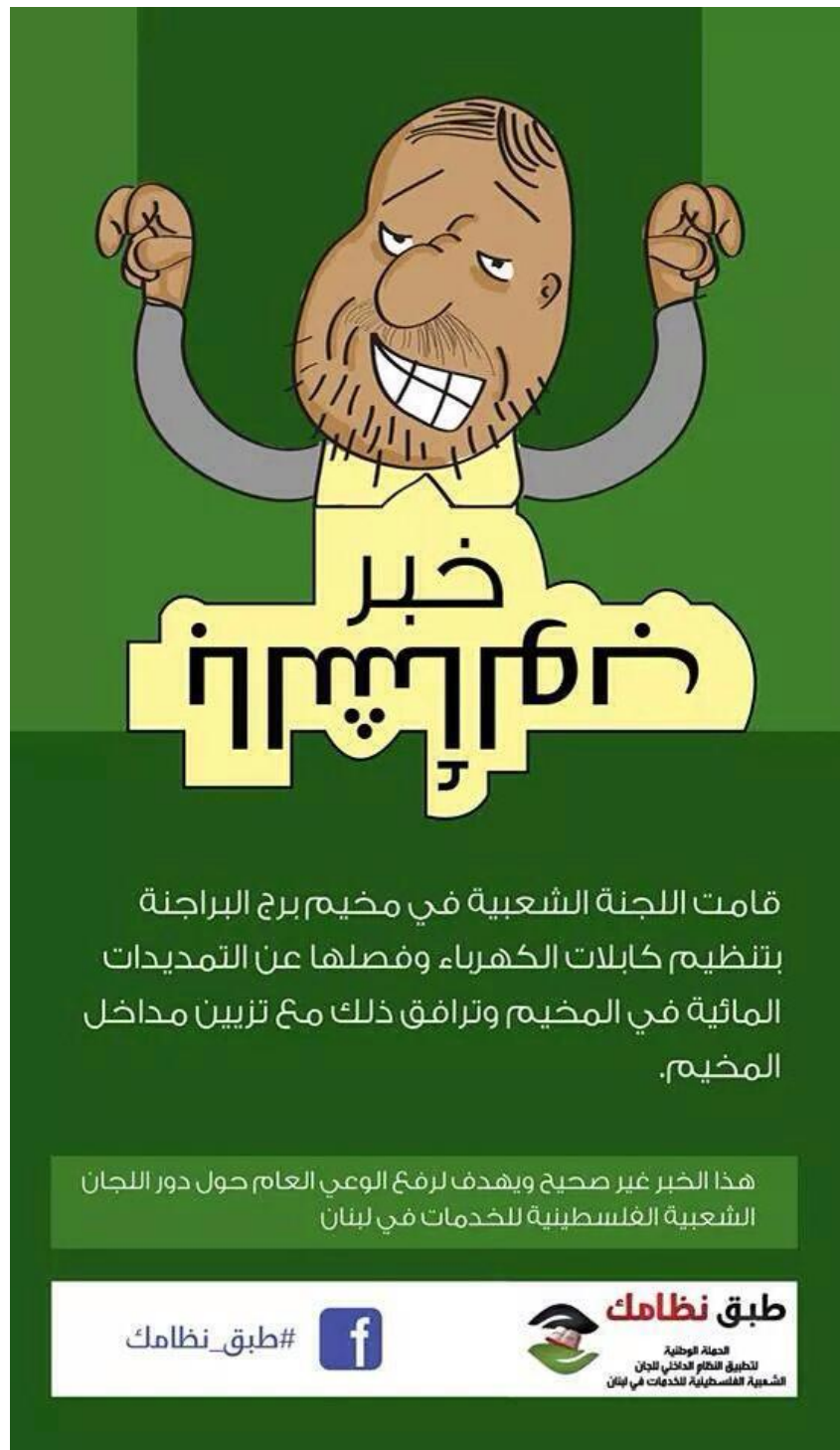
Presence on the field lasted during the two periods of fieldwork, from November 2014 to May 2015 and from January to April 2016. During this period, a number of public events were recorded, the date, location, and description of which are provided below.

Event	Date	Location	Description
Najdeh/Nada Demonstration	January 2015	Burj al-Barajneh's Camp Service Officer's office	Small gathering in the street (around 20 people), mostly women, standing, holding signs, bystanders intervening.
Football game	February 2015	Sports field alongside Tariq al Matar, approximately 1km away from Burj al-Barajneh	PYN members from various camps, informal time of sociability between members.
Land Day Meeting	March 2015	Burj al-Barajneh's communal room	Meeting with party and PC leaders. Increased security
Local Committee Meeting	March 2015	Shatila Youth Centre	PC and party members, PYN members, residents
Basketball game	March 2015	Tariq el Jdideh	Young PYN members. Began at Tariq el Jdideh, then walked and took the bus to the Corniche.

Local Committee Meeting	April 2015	Shatila Youth Centre	PC and party members, PYN members, residents. Followed by a drink with PYN younger members at a café in the camp.
Information Meeting	April 2015	Ahlam Laji' room	Residents, Pursue employee
Local Committee Meeting	April 2015	Ahlam Laji' room	Residents, Pursue employees, PYN members,
Nakba Week Meeting	May 2015	Markaz al-Naqab, Burj al-Barajneh	Conference in a communal room, on the theme of national resistance, guest speaker Leila Khaled
Demonstration Right to Work	May 2015	Mar Elias camp	Gathering at the main entrance, PC and party leaders, TV crew (around 15 persons in total)
Demonstration Right to Work	May 2015	ESCUA building, Beirut City Centre	Najdeh members, party members, residents, around 200/300 persons (hard to count) on a green. Police present. Many buses parked nearby with camp names and party logos.

Sit-in Right to Work	March 2016	Shatila's entrance	Several members of the CfW project present, alongside PC members and other unidentified men (less than 12 persons in total). A row of chairs and slogans in a street, photographs, presented as a sit-in for the Right to work.
Information meeting on gender-based violence	March 2016	Najdeh's Shatila office	Several members of the CfW project and a gender-based violence facilitator. Presentation of the association's engagements against gender-based violence. Debate on the adequacy of the project.

IV. “Upside-down News” posters, PYN



Upside-down news: The Popular Committee of Burj al-Barajneh Camp has undertaken the gathering of electrical cables and their separation from the water distribution network in the camp. This will be accompanied by an embellishment of the camp's entrances.



Upside-down news: The Popular Committee in Ain al-Hilweh Camp has decided to fine all shooters for \$100. The funds thus gathered will be used for a fund for special hardship cases in the camp.



Upside-down news: The Secretary of the Popular Committee of Nahr al-Barid Camp met with the Palestinian Ambassador in Lebanon to submit him a popular petition regarding the delays in the old camp's reconstruction. The Popular Committee is studying potential actions in this domain.



Upside-down news: The Department of Refugee Affairs of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation has announced that the elections of the Palestinian Popular Committees in Lebanon will take place on February the 30th next year.



اللجنة الشعبية في مخيم المية ومية تقيل احد
أعضائها بعد الكشف عن تورطه في قضايا فساد
مالي وتحيله للقضاء المختص.

هذا الخبر غير صحيح ويهدف لرفع الوعي العام حول دور اللجان
الشعبية الفلسطينية للخدمات في لبنان

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طبق نظامك

الهيئة الوطنية
لتطبيق النظام الداخلي للجان
الشعبية الفلسطينية للخدمات في لبنان

Upside-down news: The Popular Committee of Mieh-Mieh Camp has announced the suspension of one of its members after the disclosure of his involvement in cases of financial corruption. He will be brought to the adequate jurisdiction.

